



THROUGH WESTERN MADAGASCAR
IN QUEST OF THE GOLDEN BEAN



A CROCODILE-POOL IN A MANGOKY BACKWATER.

"Distance lends enchantment to the scene."

[Frontispiece

THROUGH WESTERN MADAGASCAR

IN QUEST OF THE GOLDEN BEAN

BY
WALTER D. MARCUSE

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To

MY FATHER

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P R E F A C E

ON my return to England from the island of Madagascar in the spring of 1912, I definitely resolved to write a book on my travels in the south-western portion of this increasingly important French colonial possession. Two main factors urged me to this decision. In the first place, since *Drury's Journal* in 1779, there has not appeared in English any authentic account of Madagascar's western littoral. From time to time, though not within the last decade, excellent works dealing with the east coast and great central table-lands have been published, but their reference to the Mangoky, Fiherenga, and Onilahy valleys are brief and insignificant. Their information, moreover, has generally been borrowed from meagre and somewhat ancient Norwegian sources.

Secondly, within recent years, amazing

PREFACE

economic changes have taken place throughout these regions, owing to the ever-increasing cultivation and exportation of the Madagascar butter-bean (*Phaseolus capensis*); and the effects on the native Sakalava cultivators of the resulting influx of money and its concomitant blessings and evils afford a vivid glimpse of the first encroachment of a complex civilisation on a crude barbarism, of European industry on Malagasy indolence.

I have been so deeply impressed by this veritable romance of trade that I feel confident that the history of civilisation in Western Madagascar, if such a history ever be written, will be less a recital of the achievements of French military and civil administration than a story of the mysterious appearance on this coast of a beautiful bean, its sudden bound into popularity in Europe and America as a food-stuff, and the subsequent march of material progress and mental enlightenment along the path first laid open by the irrepressible energy of modern commerce.

Under the heading "Ways of Communication and Commerce" I have treated of the two other rising industries of Western Mada-

agascar—namely, the raising of cattle, and the gathering of rubber ; and as the last-mentioned product has of late been viewed with growing interest by the general public, I have gone into some detail with regard to latex-producing trees and shrubs, and the various methods of preparation in vogue among the natives. From the facts reviewed I have striven to indicate in what direction a future may be expected for Madagascar rubber.

WALTER D. MARCUSE.

DUNEDIN,
CATERHAM VALLEY,
SURREY.

December, 1913.

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THROUGH WESTERN MADAGASCAR: IN QUEST OF THE GOLDEN BEAN

CHAPTER I

THE COMORO ISLES TO MAJUNGA

MAHOMET, my Somali boy, bade me a mournful farewell, his bright yellow hair (bleached to this startling hue by the application of a paste made with lime) lending to his swarthy visage a touch of the ludicrous, in spite of his grief. I had enlisted his services at Djibouti, where I had found him starving, and was now leaving him at Zanzibar in charge of a friend with whom I knew he would be comfortable. Mahomet counted himself no commoner among his fellows : he had visited Vienna, Berlin, London, and Marseilles with the "Somali village," and spoke three languages

fluently. Adding to these accomplishments his full share of native impudence and vivacity, he had attained the distinction of being quite a well-known character both at Djibouti and on board.

I watched him depart with regret, and turned my attention to the antics of a swarm of Zanzibar boys, who scrambled monkey-like up the sides of the steamer and dived thence for coins. I flung a silver piece in the air ; a lithe, dark body shot like an arrow from the bulwarks and followed in its shining wake ; a spout of foam and a pair of black heels—he had vanished—only to return, a moment afterwards, with an unmistakable gleam of satisfaction beaming through the brine streaming down his face.

Then an ebony imp in a cockle-shell canoe caught my eye, the setting sun throwing every detail of his little figure and frail barque into sharp contrasts of light and shade. I had barely time to snap him with my camera before he began to spin like a spoon-bait—dug-out and all—in a series of rapid somersaults through the water for the edification of the passengers and in hopes of a reward. The European, with a lively



MAHOMET, MY SOMALI BOY, ENGAGED AT DJIBOUTI.

dread of that voracious monster the blue shark, is apt to gaze on these aquatic displays with a sense of uneasiness; but he may reassure himself, for the diving boy has an instinctive knowledge of the presence of his enemy, and only enters the water when he is perfectly certain that no danger is nigh.

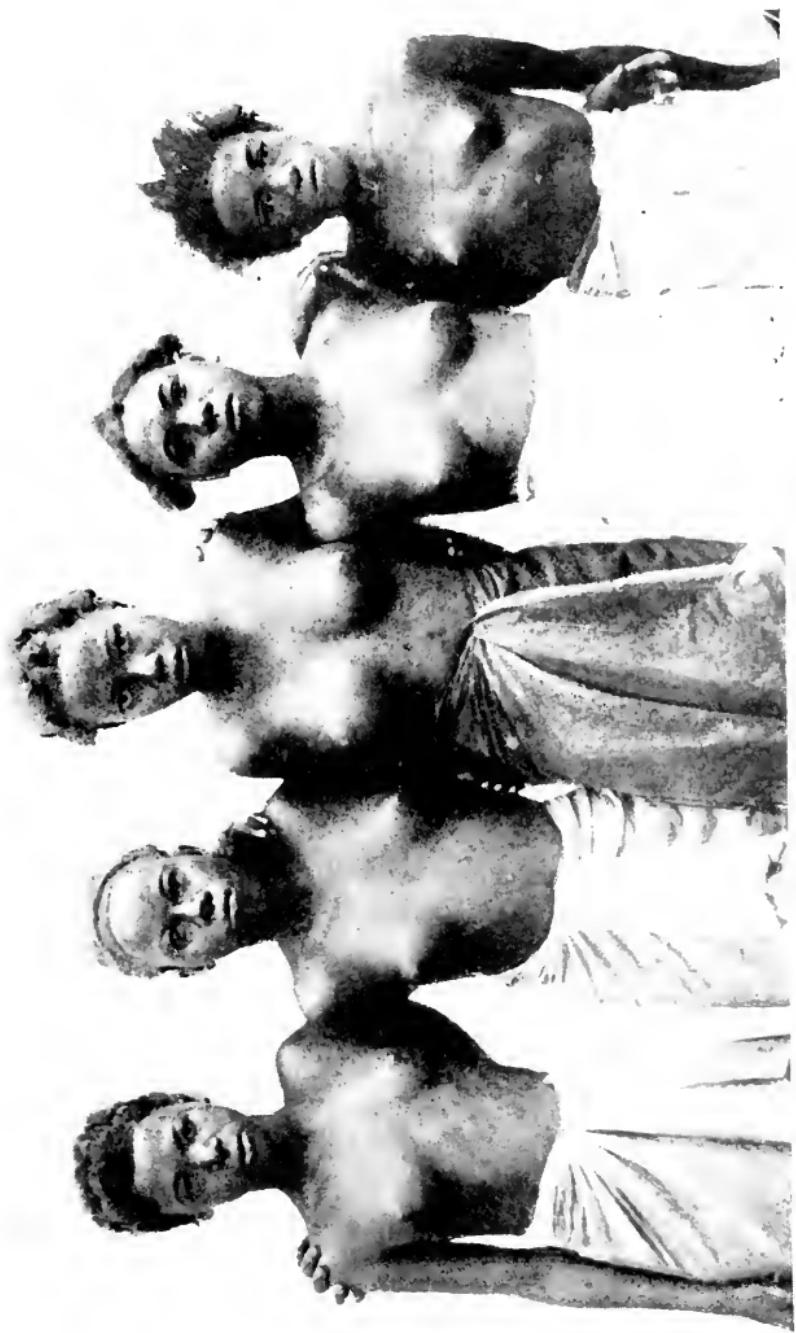
A throb of the engines and a turn of the screw, and we moved slowly away from this school of human porpoises; the graceful fronds of the tall coconut palms, waving gently over the dark green mass of the clove-tree groves—all that was visible of Zanzibar—grew fainter and fainter, and finally faded away with something of the impalpable beauty of a dream!

We sighted the purple, mist-capped, volcanic peaks of the Comoro group after two days' steaming—two days of incessant chatter about fever prevention, the favourite topic of the exile bound for Madagascar. The social atmosphere aboard, too, had grown more and more dismal since our departure from Zanzibar—even a representative of Sunlight Soap failed to live up to the reputation of his wares and dispel the gloom—so

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that I experienced a sense of relief when we cast anchor in the clear, calm waters of the coral lagoon off Mayotta.

Throughout these islands an Arab civilisation reigns supreme : there is a sultanate in Johanna, and Mussulmans are to be found everywhere in Grand Comoro and Mohilla, though considerable numbers of the Sakalava people from Madagascar settled throughout the group in the early part of the nineteenth century, when the warlike Hovas swept down in conquering hordes from the Imerina plateau and drove them from their own country. Mayotta is one of the earliest French settlements, but to me it gave an impression of unspeakable desolation, and I still retain a vivid recollection of a Frenchman ashore, his face bearing unmistakable evidence of the ravages of fever, who sold bottles of nauseous lemonade at a franc apiece in the shade of a poor, corrugated-iron shanty. He was the only white man visible, and his indifferent refreshment-bar the only one available ! As our steamer was obliged to remain until sunset, there was ample time to explore Daoudzi, the principal port in the group.



YOUNG MASHIKORO GIRLS (SAKALAVA),
Lower Mangoky Valley.

The soil of these islands is fertile beyond description, and supports a vegetation of bewildering luxuriance and unsurpassable beauty. Everywhere the bougainvillea hangs in purple festoons, and even masks with its flaunting blossom the ravages that time and neglect have made on the Government buildings dating from the Third Empire; here and there hibiscus trees glow with innumerable jets of vivid, scarlet flame; and in the gardens the air is drowsy with the exquisite fragrance of the ilong-ilong. But in spite of this floral gaiety, Daoudzi is depressing, for, on all sides, sugar factories and plantations, abandoned owing to the decline of the cane-sugar industry, present the mournful aspect of ruins. Nature, heedless and irrepressible, is swiftly hiding under an overwhelming wealth of verdure these sites where once was heard the hum of busy life; the jungle is sweeping like a tide over the derelicts of a ruined industry, and the place seems haunted by the spirits of lost fortunes and shattered hopes.

On the jetty, and striking a note of contrast to the general desolation, several remarkably handsome Sakalava girls from Nossi-Bé,

dressed in their brightest lambas and wearing a wealth of gold coins in their shining, jet-black hair, paraded up and down. They walked with a certain air of dignity and with that graceful, lissome carriage peculiar to those whose feet are unshod and whose burdens are carried upon the head. These bold Malagasy beauties were markedly superior to the native-born Comoro women, and doubtless belonged to wealthy, French vanilla planters, who, true to the Gallic spirit, worship Aphrodite as ardently when she is of bronze and wearing a lamba as when she is of alabaster and gowned by Paquin.

In the native quarters, on the shores of the lagoon, we discovered an old Arab—probably once a slave-trader, whom the white man's sense of humanity had long since deprived of a profitable, if brutal, calling—and were bargaining with him for some of the island stamps, when darkness swept down with tropical suddenness. Myriads of fireflies filled the trees and verandas with their emerald sheen ; the song of the cicadas rang out shrill on the silence of the night ; there seemed a pause—and then the surcharged atmosphere let fall its humid curtain, and

great drops of dew collected on all unsheltered things. We promptly beat a hasty retreat to our vessel, and were thankful to regain the brightly lighted saloon, instead of courting malaria among the malodorous miasmas of the shore. Shortly afterwards we steamed away, and high up on the promontory, the Mayotta wireless station sparked and hissed and buzzed as Majunga on the Madagascar coast was advised of our departure.

At daybreak on the following morning, I saw the curious blood-red cliffs at the mouth of the Betsiboka River darken to a wondrous deep purple in the first warm glow of the rising sun ; the dying breath of the north-east monsoon feebly wafted the land-smell down to us as we lay-to off Crocodile Point ; and the deep boom of the brass signal-gun on deck announced the arrival of the European mail to the slumbering town.

Soon, all was life and bustle ; native traders and Europeans seemed suddenly to awaken from an ogre's spell of drowsiness and gathered in manifestly excited groups on the quays ; ox-carts, surely of Indian origin, belonging to the Banian coolies, paraded at the water's edge ; picturesque Arabs from

their dhows, a living embodiment of my boyish conception of fire-eating freebooters, mingled with dapper custom-house officials, in all the glory of white drills and shining gold buttons ; the single-humped Madagascar oxen alone refused to be roused from tropical lethargy, and, having shaken the heavy dew from their backs, lay down once more to slumber peacefully in the full glare of an already powerful sun.

After being carried across the red odorous mud of the foreshore, we gained the quays, and, looking back across the bay, saw the little, puffing, shallow-draught steamers from Marovoay and Mavatenana going alongside the mail steamer to deliver up their precious cargoes of post-bags from the up-river districts and from Antananarivo.

The last-mentioned town can now be reached in a three to four days' journey from Majunga, travelling first by water as far as Mavatenana, and thence by automobile up to the lofty Imerina plateau. This forms a striking contrast to that fatal ascent of the Betsiboka Valley by the French military expedition of 1895, when 95 per cent. of those unfortunate troops contracted fever

and perished miserably. The two columns of French infantry with ordnance, which formed the army of invasion, encountered enormous difficulties, and although they finally reached the capital and captured it without meeting with any serious opposition from the Hova forces, the two generals upon whom the Malagasies most relied—viz. tazo (fever) and hazo (forest)—offered a stout resistance to the French advance and managed to decimate their numbers.

Majunga is the only port, or indeed town, worthy of that name on the whole west coast of Madagascar, and its unrivalled position will doubtless add still further to its importance in the future, for, situated at the mouth of the Betsiboka and sheltered from all cyclones, it affords a safe and deep anchorage to vessels of all draughts. The commerce of Majunga is considerable, and each year sees an increase, especially in connection with the exportation of rice. British South Africa, including Rhodesia, as well as the Portuguese East African colonies, import large quantities of this grain; and rubber, raffia, and mangrove bark, to the value of several millions of francs, annually leave this

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ancient Arab settlement for Europe and the U.S.A.

Cumbersome yet seaworthy dhows, flying the red ensign at the peak, come across from India with the north-east monsoon, returning, like a flock of ungainly, migratory birds, with the south-westerly winds. These primitive craft are entirely devoid of any cabin accommodation, and how the swarthy crew retain a supply of fresh water has always been to me a matter for conjecture. Of course, it sometimes happens that a dhow gets blown by storms from her course, and then a terrible death awaits her wretched crew, for help-bringing steamers or large sailing vessels are nowadays scarce in these waters. Before the era of the Suez Canal, when the great three-decked East Indiamen and majestic China tea-clippers (what a world of romance their very names recall!) used to beat up the Mozambique Channel to revictual in St. Augustin's Bay, before crossing the Indian Ocean, they frequently ran across a dhow with her luckless crew reduced to the last extremity through want of fresh water.

But this rude Arab craft has outlived her

gigantic and picturesque sisters, and, to-day, these dhows ply a busy trade among the many shallow bays and inlets which are a feature of the coastline to the north and to the south-west of Majunga, and which are inaccessible to vessels of deeper draught.

In addition to the exportation of the produce already mentioned, Majunga is rapidly advancing in all that pertains to commercial enterprise. An Anglo-French syndicate has built a meat-canning factory on a favourable site across the river, and if only cattle can be safely transported in sufficient numbers from the interior, this venture should prove successful. The streets, too, in the new town are paved—a most unusual occurrence in Madagascar—and they boast the unexpected luxury of electric light. An ice factory and an hotel—the only ones on the whole west coast of Madagascar—make a praiseworthy attempt to render life in this far-away tropical port endurable to the comfort-loving European. Situated between the European and native quarters and shaded by magnificent mango and baobab trees, is to be found the Club Sportif, but its cement

tennis-courts are poorly laid upon the site of a drained swamp.

The most popular portion of Majunga, however, is its marine parade, and though during the day, in the dry season, the blinding reflection of the sun's rays off the white paving-slabs is exceedingly trying to the eyes and apt to cause painful sun-headaches, towards five o'clock in the afternoon, this promenade becomes the fashionable haunt of Majunga. Europeans, natives, Creoles—all stroll and take the air, which is alive with the hum of the latest chatter and gossip of the town; the crowd is kaleidoscopic in its colour and movement, for this is the hour of sartorial display and social rivalry; and, as if casting the glamour of nature over the pride of human foibles and fashions, far out at sea the sun will set, flinging ribbons and streamers of scarlet and gold into the darkening ocean and sky, the vividness and beauty of the colouring surpassing anything I have seen in any other part of the world.

CHAPTER II

NAMELA TO AMBOHIBÉ

AFTER emerging from the Betsiboka estuary, the small coasting-steamer skirts the reddish-brown, arid cliffs of the Ambongo coastline until she doubles Cape St. Andrew, passing, en route, several vast but shallow inlets, whose shores are dismal and unwholesome mangrove swamps. The most notable of these arms of the sea are Marambitsy and Baly (more often called Soalala) Bays; but everywhere along this coastline the population is sparse and scattered. After passing Cape St. Andrew, our course lay due south, and from this headland to the seventeenth parallel of latitude, there stretches a region of giant coconut palms and filayou (or casuarina) trees. Beyond this point, a coastal forest belt appears, and the verdant scenery is similar to that which

characterises the island of Nossi-Bé and the coast at Analave.

In this vast and densely wooded tract, valuable timbers abound, the mahogany and ebony being of especially fine quality, while farther inland the natives tap the *Landolphia* vines for black Kuidroa rubber. Many rare and exquisite varieties of orchid may be discovered by those intrepid enough to penetrate the fever-haunted gloom of this world of tangled vegetation, and in 1911 one or two new and beautiful specimens fell as prizes to a young French doctor.

Namela, our first port of call, sent us only half a dozen dhows, mostly laden with acajou wood, a species of mahogany; but the agent brought aboard for sale some models of pirogues (outrigger canoes) delightfully carved in ebony, with outrigger paddles and triangular sail complete. The decoration and execution of these dainty miniatures show a keen æsthetic sense on the part of the native carver, and I still possess one—a beautiful memento of an otherwise uninteresting place.

The glory—if that term can be applied—of Namela has passed, for in bygone days this port was the centre for the slave traffic

from Mozambique, and as the dhows with their curious lateen sails lay beside our steamer, they involuntarily recalled the story of many an exciting chase of rascally trader by British frigate—it always was a British frigate—which seasoned my schoolday fiction to an appalling degree. Maintirano, which is separated from Namela by a salt-water lagoon and lies a mile or so farther to the south, once bore a similar infamous reputation, but now plies an honourable trade in hides, beans, and red Voahiné caoutchouc, and is garrisoned by a small force of native troops.

The agent of the French line here, during an interesting conversation I had with him, told me a tragic story about his father, which throws a vivid light on the turbulent times that followed the war of 1895. His sire, who was a Bourbon Creole of lengthy residence in Madagascar, possessed the full confidence of the influential Sakalava Kings, for he had for years carried on a lucrative trade in slaves with the connivance of these avaricious and warlike chiefs. When the French troops arrived on their mission of subduing the district and putting an end

to the vexatious guerilla warfare and the unceasing internecine strife that was swiftly decimating the population, this Creole was requested by the French commander to act as an intermediary to obtain, if possible, the peaceful submission of the armed natives to the French Government.

In his mission the trader was eminently successful, and after a prolonged "cabary," or palaver, the native warriors consented to lay down their weapons at an appointed place on the banks of the Tsiribohina River. To this rendezvous, and with that object in view, several hundreds of them repaired, and the French commander, having received their guns and being satisfied as to their friendly intentions, allowed them to pass the night beside his encampment. But the negotiations so well begun were to end in a disaster. Towards dawn, for some unknown reason, panic seized the French troops, and in a state of utmost alarm they seized their rifles and shot down the defenceless Malagasy to a man.

The Sakalava, naturally enough, came to the conclusion that the Creole intermediary had betrayed their kinsmen in a most das-



VEZO WOMAN.

tardly manner, and secretly determined to pay off the score should he ever fall into their hands. Subsequently, they managed to capture the inoffensive trader, and upon him they wreaked a most terrible vengeance. Having buried the vainly protesting Creole up to his neck in the sand, they drove a herd of bullocks over him until his head had been trampled to a pulp.

The inhabitants of Maintirano simply swarmed up the bare sides of the steamer to exchange their carved wooden models of canoes for ship's biscuits, and the more weevily the latter are, the greater luxury are they esteemed by the native epicure. These Vezos (a name applied to all the coastal tribes inhabiting the Sakalava country) were singularly handsome men, and some of the women, who brought mangoes, coconuts, and pawpaws aboard, were almost of a South Sea Island type of beauty.

Our stay here, however, was of brief duration, and there now occurred an incident which, ludicrous though it may seem to a disinterested party, must have proved most vexatious to those with business interests involved. As the French Government dis-

likes a subsidised mail steamer to be delayed, the Captain, in the midst of shipping the cargo from the dhows, gave orders to weigh anchor, and away we steamed, leaving the furious dhow owners, gesticulating wildly but ineffectually, with half their goods still aboard their dhows. I believe this wily French mariner took good care to embark all the valuable goods, such as rubber and ebony, but hides, raffia, mangrove bark, and all merchandise difficult to handle were left behind.

“What is going to happen to the commodities not shipped this voyage?” I asked of the captain.

“Eh bien! on le fera le prochain,” he said, and added drily: “Tant pis pour Messieurs les chargeurs!”

Fifteen hours later, we hove-to outside the Morondava bar, but how the navigating officer distinguished this patch of boiling surf and steaming mangroves from the rest of the coastline I am at loss to imagine. The landlubber sees nothing but a more vicious-looking bar and somewhat flatter land—a happy augury for intending landing parties!

After watching the bean fleet of twenty

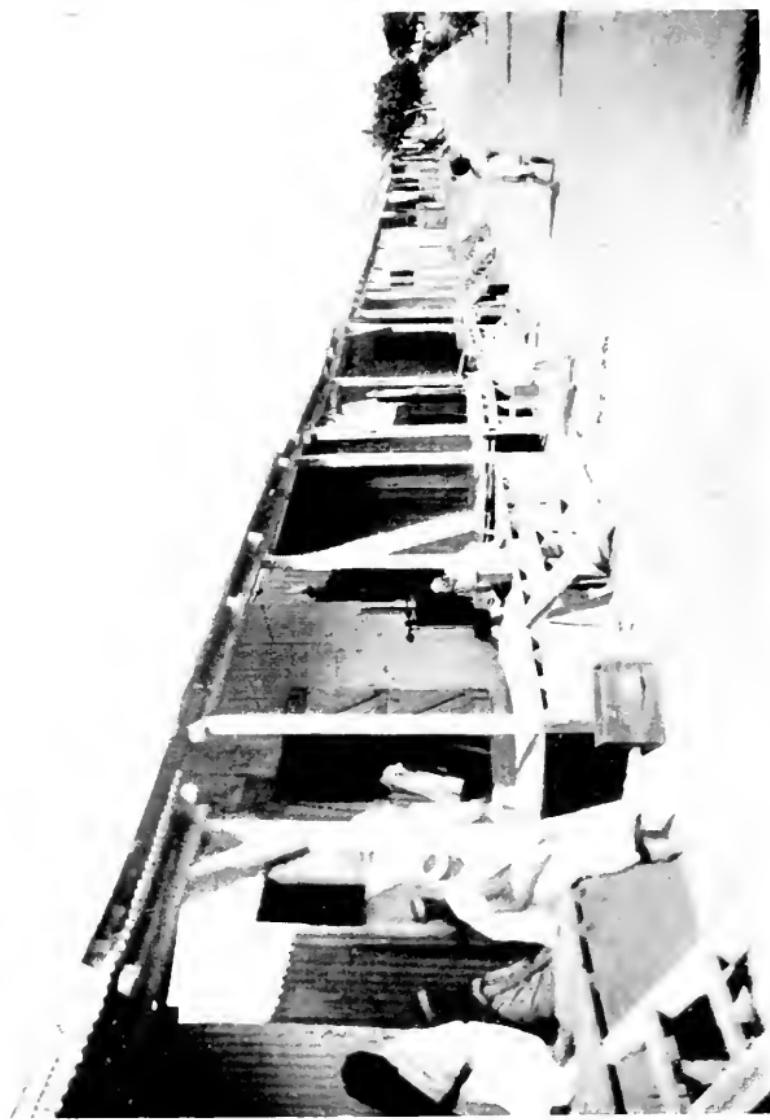
schooners put out from the shelter of a sand-spit at the mouth of the Morondava River and gain the steamer's dripping sides with more or less sea-water damage to their cargoes, we essayed a fearsome voyage in an outrigger canoe, measuring scarcely 12 feet in length by 2 feet in breadth. To embark in this frail nutshell of a craft called forth all our latent acrobatic powers, for we had to hold ourselves balanced ready to leap aboard just as the canoe was cast up level with the steamer's decks on the crest of a gigantic Mozambique roller.

Eventually we reached the shore, drenched to the skin and sitting in 6 inches of salt water; and were not the temperature of the sea high in these latitudes, landing in an outrigger canoe would entail terrible hardship. With clothes steaming on our backs, under the most grilling sunshine I have ever experienced, even in the tropics, we had now to traverse a mile of slimy and reeking lagoon before we reached Morondava and enjoyed the pleasure of sinking ankle deep in the sand of the filthy main street.

As we trudged along, a ship's officer remarked that on the previous voyage one of

the passengers, a gently nurtured and refined girl of good Parisian family, had disembarked at Morondava, as she was to be married to the white commander of the local Senegalese riflemen. I felt that his information went a long way to support the old adage "Omnia vincit amor," and strove to picture to myself, as I involuntarily indulged in breaths of the foetid miasma emanating from the surrounding swamps, how a *fin de siècle* maid from Gay Paris would dispel the boredom of two long years in such a place as Morondava.

Four miles inland from the town, lies virgin forest, and between the forest and the shore is a region of swamps of inexhaustible fertility, supporting a rampant tropical vegetation in which huge mangoes abound and bear a profusion of delicious fruit. At Serinam, upon the Tsiribohina River, some miles to the northward, a rubber concern has erected a factory, largely, I believe, with British capital, and there, in an unhealthy and fever-stricken desolation, the indefatigable trader toils to supply the insatiable demand for this product so necessary to the luxury of modern life. Otherwise, in these regions, the sole distraction for a white man appears to consist in



INDIAN BAZAAR, MORONDAVA.

speeding on the work of exterminating the beautiful egret (*Ardea ghazetta*), which, thanks to the attentions of numerous "chasseurs" during the breeding season, is now almost an extinct species, whilst prior to the war it could be counted in thousands on the lakes of the west coast.

If it were not for the above-mentioned unhealthiness, a brighter future might lie before the Tsiribohina valley as regards the cultivation of the Madagascar butter-bean (*Phaseolus capensis*) and the exploitation of Lombiry caoutchouc, but the utter inaccessibility of the up-river districts offers a forbidding obstacle to European enterprise. The most energetic trader is, moreover, disheartened by the extraordinary difficulty experienced in getting his produce aboard the ocean steamer when it has at length reached the coast safely; and returning late at night to his wretched shanty ashore, his clothes dripping with sea-water after his canoe journey from the mail-boat, he generally does not trouble to change his clothes, but forthwith indulges in a goodly dose of absinthe to revive his drooping spirits and ward off the ever-prevalent fever. As may be surmised, the result is usually the re-

verse, and gradually the malarial attacks become chronic, until the kidneys are affected, when quinine is no longer efficacious and his only hope lies in constant subcutaneous injections of certain saline preparations.

In Madagascar, however, the second attack of blackwater fever nearly always proves fatal, so that unremitting care must be exercised if a white man is desirous of passing any length of time on this unhealthy coast. Here is an engaging field for research for those interested in tropical medicine ; and he who succeeds in finding a remedy for this terrible scourge (undoubtedly the work of a mosquito, of which pest there are innumerable varieties) will not only be a benefactor to the white dweller in the tropics, but will also put into the trader's hand the key which will enable him to open successfully the door leading to the commercial prosperity of western Madagascar.

CHAPTER III

AMBOHIBÉ AND THE MANGOKY RIVER

“**T**HEN you will be dead!” Such was the chilling comment of a fellow traveller, a young German employed by a well-known Hamburg house, when I announced my intention of leaving the mail-boat at Ambohibé and making that town a base from which I could explore the delta and main stream of the Mangoky River, one of the largest west-coast waterways.

Our small coasting steamer was rolling from rail to rail on the heavy swell sweeping up the Mozambique Channel from the Southern Indian Ocean, and as we turned our eyes shorewards a long line of foaming breakers met our gaze. Beyond this stretch of snow-white surge, the feathery tops of some stunted¹

¹ I discovered on subsequent examination the cause of the peculiar dwarfed growth of these palms: the stems were simply pierced through and through with the tunnels of the rhinoceros beetle.

coconut palms could be discerned, and, half hidden in their verdure, the red-painted roof of the Norwegian Lutheran mission-station. This was all that was visible of Ambohibé.

Then, as we vainly searched the shore for signs of any other habitation, a whole flotilla of little yacht-like lighters put out to sea, looking, against the dull green background of mangroves, more like a flock of graceful, snowy-winged birds than the outcoming freight for an ocean-going steamer. There was breathless suspense amongst the passengers on board our vessel as craft after craft, more or less successfully, shot through that cruel line of spouting shoals, and to the accompaniment of clamorous songs (indispensable to the native at work), gained the calmer water outside the bar, where our anchorage lay.

Alongside, there was soon a scene of bustle and turmoil; hand-to-hand fighting took place as the traders struggled to gain the best berth, and the fracas was only subdued by two angry ship's officers, who, amid furious oaths, administered a liberal supply of sounding blows on the thick skulls of the native shipowners. Finally, some semblance of order was restored, and the derricks were

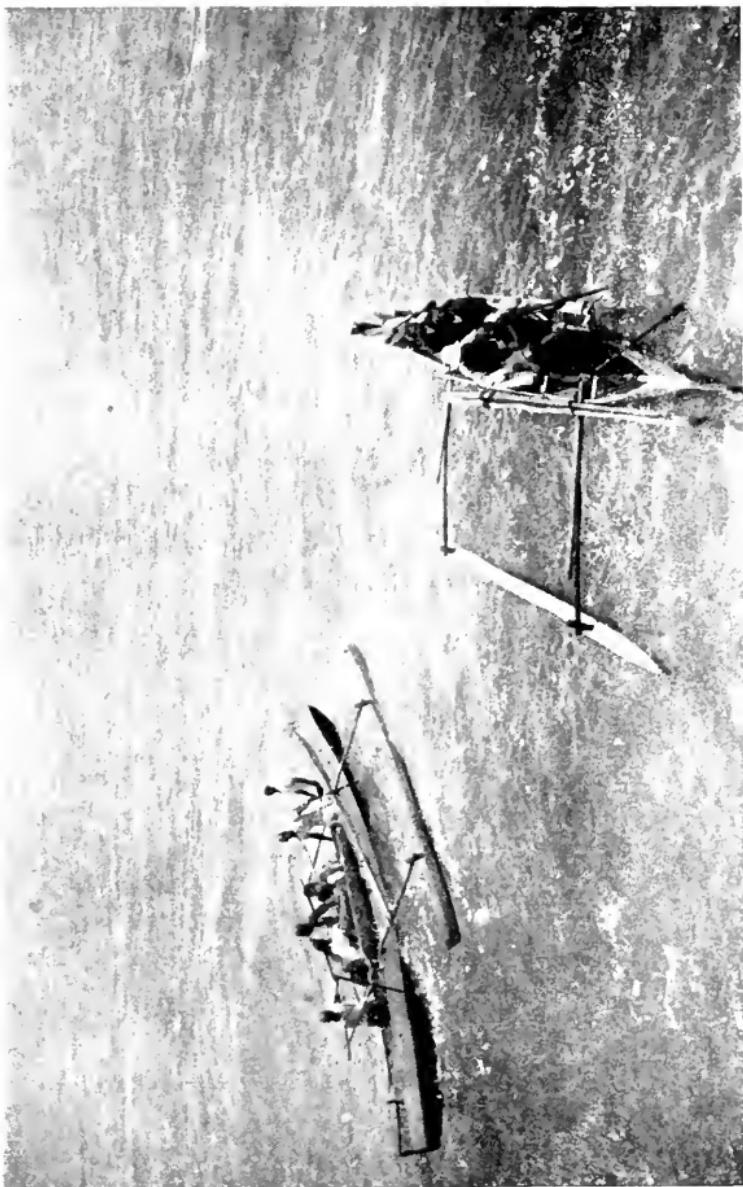
lowered to pick up their loads of beans, hides, and rubber, as the case might be. The first empty boat took away what little inward cargo there was on board, consisting of a couple of bales of empty bean gunnies and two hogsheads of fiery red wine—the latter for native consumption.

Amidst the noise and bustle of this shipping of goods, huge Sakalava Malagasies swarmed up on deck to barter their lemurs with the foc'sle hands ; while their womenfolk, some of them with a wealth of golden coins, including British sovereign pieces, entwined with pearls around their copper-coloured necks, surveyed the interesting scene from their weirdly carved lakas or pirogues. (The Sakalava word for these canoes is “ laka,” and the Vezos navigate them with great skill, either by means of mahogany paddles or with a triangular sail.)

Several of these pirogues brought French officials or traders aboard, many of them accompanied by their handsome native wives ; but from one of them a young lieutenant of the French colonial infantry was tenderly lifted, and gently carried up the companion, his wasted frame, deathlike pallor, and shining eyes declaring him a victim of that dreaded

scourge of the Madagascar low country—malarial fever, in one form or other. His debility and lassitude formed a pathetic contrast to the vigour and high spirits of the lithe, bronzine Vezos, whose muscles simply rippled under their glossy skins as they hurried hither and thither about the deck. I felt doubly sorry for him, for there is no public recognition, nor is there the compensating, if bloody, romance of the clash and din of arms for the soldier who makes the silent sacrifice of his health, perhaps his life, at his lonely post beside some pestilential Madagascar rice-swamp.

Suddenly, every one's attention was centred on a fast-approaching double canoe, and as the piroguiers were less naked than is usual, we inferred that it bore a person of more than ordinary importance. In any case, he was of unusual bulk and weighed, I should say, twenty stone at the least ; but his size did not detract from his agility, for as his canoe was cast up on the crest of a great wave rolling shorewards, he sprang up the ship's ladder and gained the deck with ludicrous nimbleness. He was a merchant, and it is whispered that the natives refuse to carry his palanquin, so that



PIROGUES APPROACHING MAIL STEAMER.

he is obliged to have recourse to a canoe when he wishes to travel, and if that method of journeying is impracticable, he is constrained to walk.

I gathered, also, that he was one of the few surviving French civilians ashore, at which I was surprised, for the mean annual temperature of Ambohibé is well in the eighties. At one time, so he himself said, there were other merchants who were formidable competitors of his, but they were now no more. They had come to a tragic end. In celebrating the purchase of a quantity of hides some twenty miles farther north along the coast, they had dined, or rather drunk, too well; for though there is always an insufficiency of food, there is never a dearth of alcoholic liquors in the Mangoky delta. After carousing till dusk, and with the courage begotten of strong wine, they decided to make the return journey, and, in spite of the natives' warnings, flung themselves down to sleep on top of their piles of newly purchased hides, which were balanced across the double outriggers of their canoes. Whilst crossing the Tombolava mouth of the Mangoky, the boats were

caught in a tidal eddy, and so choppy was the sea that the cargoes of hides were washed overboard, and with them the blissfully unconscious traders.

The sequel was the usual one, namely, the four Vezo boys swam ashore, but the Vazaha (white strangers—the usual term all over the island for Europeans) were never seen again. It is very strange that whenever a catastrophe occurs to a canoe in these waters, the natives are always saved, but the white men invariably perish ; so that one is, for want of a better explanation, forced to the unpleasant conclusion that sharks have a predilection for the latter.

As is well known, the Indian storekeeper flourishes throughout Eastern and Southern Africa, so that it is not surprising to find Gujerati merchants from the north of Bombay in the west-coast ports of the Great African Island. These gentlemen, some of them with very doubtful commercial reputations, soon made themselves heard on deck, and with frantic gesticulations carried on a lengthy and indescribably noisy altercation with the ship's officers as to the number of packages embarked. Finally, their claims

were agreed to, probably for the sake of terminating the irritating hubbub, but I am inclined to think that the ship's tally was not always at fault.

Conspicuous amidst this concourse of nationalities gathered round a tired and peevish purser, sitting perspiring in his office, were the French officials, consisting of the chief of customs and the commander of the native police, looking very spick and span in their gala uniform of clean white drill. They appeared in the saloon just as we were sitting down to luncheon, but whether their entrance at this psychological moment was due to accident or design, I should not like to say, but judging from their thoroughly famished looks, it seemed an excellently timed arrival. The steamship company charged them six francs each for a very indifferent meal, which seemed to me rather an imposition, considering that gritty rice and bad potatoes form their staple diet, often the only food obtainable on shore.

The German liners are much more hospitable, and their captains not only extend a cordial welcome to the entire white population of these coastal villages (they can hardly be

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termed ports), but take a friendly interest in the unfortunate colonists, traders, and officials who are obliged to reside in these isolated communities. The consequence is that the arrival of a German vessel is hailed with far greater show of delight than even the Government mail-boat.

The correspondent of the *Messageries Maritimes* (they do not rise to the dignity of an agent on this coast) was a fever-racked but energetic little Frenchman from the Midi, and he kindly directed my baggage to be carefully lowered (an extremely necessary precaution) into a Creole-built schooner of ancient appearance. The shipment of our bullion, however, was a troublesome and anxious operation, for all along this sparsely inhabited coast a man is obliged to be his own banker, and, to make matters more inconvenient, the silver five-franc piece is the only currency. Having procured lengths of native raffia-cord and taken the precaution to borrow lifebuoys from an obliging captain, we embarked, the Vezos, who carried upon their bare shoulders the small wooden cases containing 10,000 francs apiece, simply staggering down the ship's ladder to an accom-

paniment of grunts and imprecations because of the excessive and concentrated weight of their loads.

My inexperience of the stability of the pirogue caused me many misgivings as to the capacity of these fragile craft, dancing wildly on a choppy sea, to carry the weight, especially now that a stiff southerly breeze had sprung up and was churning the deep blue wavelets to foam-flecked breakers. Every jerk on the mooring-ropes seemed sufficient to break the gunwale asunder, but my fears were soon to vanish, and I was to learn that the pirogue is one of the most seaworthy of boats for these warm waters.

Four splendid specimens of the Sakalava race, broad-shouldered and deep-chested from constant paddling, manned our barque, and dipping their strong blades to a three-hundred-year-old chanty, sent the light craft of soft hasomolanga wood with its ebony gunwales, carved prow, and beautifully moulded hardwood outrigger, scudding through the dancing sea.

As we approached the roaring bar, one of the Vezos shouted aloud, "Soa maré" ("Very good to-day"), and as I gazed at the

seething, boiling surf I tried to imagine what the crossing might be like when it was bad ! Next moment we were into it ; a great roller tossed our boat up like a helpless cork and flung it bodily forward amid clouds of flying spray. It seemed as if we could not possibly live many minutes in such a sea, but no sooner had we emerged from the blinding deluge, than the helmsman stood up and coolly and dexterously balanced the canoe with his broad, wonderfully carved steering paddle. Then the next wave overtook us, and we were carried into safety on its spumy crest, just missing the angry backwash by a fraction of a second.

Ere we had escaped the danger, however, the backward curl of a wave caught my sun-helmet and whisked it off my head ; but as it was being borne away on the surging eddies, a man in the bow, Guaky by name, heedless of sharks and the terrific undercurrent, plunged into the water and secured my headgear, and triumphantly fought his way back to the boat. Two cynical Frenchmen ashore assured me that it was only the expectation of a reward from the Vazaha that had spurred Guaky to this courageous

deed. This may have been the case, and if their assurance was correct, it shows how reckless of his life the average Vezo is.

In any case, the boatman saved me from a dangerous sunstroke, for I could not have withstood the tremendous power of the Madagascar sun shining on my unprotected head for many minutes, and I was only too glad to recompense the native accordingly.

Altogether the journey had been a sufficiently exciting one for the most adventurous spirit, and when we reached the sheltered Fangoro outlet of the Mangoky, on the landward side of the bar, the canoe-men were dripping with perspiration, we were drenched to the skin, and the pirogue was half-full of sea-water. The left-hand bank of the creek, consisting of sand-dunes, afforded us a convenient landing-place, whereas on the other side a mangrove swamp flourished, and tainted the breeze with its strange, sickly odour. A mangrove swamp is, perhaps, one of the most loathsome sights of the tropical world; and when I first looked on this expanse of quivering mud, alive with strange, crawling things half-fish, half-lizard, denizeden

by myriads of evil-smelling, hideous, and hairy boring crabs, basking at the mouths of their burrows in the oozing slime, I felt that had Doré visited a mangrove swamp before illustrating Dante's Inferno, it would probably have doubled the vividness of his depiction.

Drawn up on the foreshore of the sandy left bank, were several serviceable pirogues, each prow being beautifully fashioned and finished with ebony or acajou wood, and bearing the owner's name painted in a curious imitation of Latin characters. Underneath the names had been inserted the prices paid, which varied from sixty to ninety francs, but I am inclined to think these figures were rather those dear to the imagination of the proud proprietors than the amounts that had actually been disbursed.

On the creek itself some double canoes, hailing from the interior, were unloading Pois du cap (better known as Madagascar butter-beans) on to a native schooner with a ridiculously small hold. The work was proceeding with feverish haste, in spite of the intense heat, because the shippers were anxious to reach the mail-steamer in time to have their merchandise received. I

glanced round in every direction for a glimpse of a European habitation, but the only one visible was the Norwegian mission-station, constructed on twelve-foot piles driven into the sand. The remaining structures were merely native huts built of barraratty reeds.

Leaving my baggage in charge of the boat-boys, I started out on a tour of investigation, and after trudging over the soft white sand-dunes, the blinding reflection from which was most trying to the eyes, I came upon the main street of the "town"—two rows of ramshackle, corrugated-iron shanties walling in a long narrow strip of filthy sand. These mean hovels formed the bazaar and were the property of Indian traders, who appear to be quite insensible to the irritating attentions of innumerable flies and the discomfort of a noisome squalor rendered more virulent by the oppressive heat (my pocket thermometer recorded 97° in the shade).

Farther on, I chanced upon the native Sakalava village, where the cleaner paths and firmer soil afforded a welcome change from the Hindu quarter. Here, I discovered a sun-scorched, emaciated, and anæmic-looking

Bourbon Creole, seated on an empty vermouth case in the shade cast by a tarpaulin stretched on a boat mast. He was surrounded by a group of fifty or sixty Vezos women, each, carrying a 60-lb. sack on her head, and was listlessly supervising the weighing of each parcel of picked beans. On seeing me, he feebly inquired what the Vazaha was doing in such a place; and when I informed him of my intention of remaining ashore for some time, he held up his hands by way of protest, and lisped with that curious intonation peculiar to the Bourbonnaise of *Les Incroyables* period :

“ Mais voyons, monsieur, il n'y a absolument rien à manger ici, et surtout l'eau est extrêmement mauvais ! ”

I left him discoursing and joined the ship's doctor, who was ashore cramming a month's work into the space of a two-hours' visit. It was then that I began vividly to realise the desolation into which I had come, for I learned that the nearest resident doctor was the Government staff surgeon, who resided at Morondava, one hundred miles distant. Moreover, there was no method of communicating with him save by a canoe journey through the labyrinth of coral reefs skirting

the Menabé coast, a journey which, by the way, occupies forty-eight to sixty hours.

In the Mangoky delta, the population during the bean season amounts to several thousand natives, with the exceedingly small proportion of six Europeans and as many more true Creoles, and yet there is not a single doctor upon whom an ailing human being can call for help, nor is there any means of procuring medicine to alleviate the numerous sufferings incidental to life in the tropics !

The doctor's errand of mercy concluded, I returned to the Creole's shelter, and as I stood watching the kaleidoscopic effect of the multicoloured lambas (waistcloths) worn by the bean pickers, a young Frenchman accosted me, and with that easy hospitality common to those who dwell in isolated parts of the globe, upon hearing that I was going to stay ashore, invited me to share his one-roomed reed hut and his frugal meals. He apologised for the rough fare, but assured me that white residents were now basking in the lap of luxury in comparison with their plight during the floods of December, 1910, when all that remained on Christmas Day in the shape of provender for the entire community was one bottle of ab-

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sinthe and a handful of mouldy potatoes. I preferred, however, to pitch my canoe-sail tent and my camp bedstead on the seashore, as far as possible from the unpleasant odour emanating from the native quarters, but I gladly accepted the offer of a joint mess and placed all my provision cases at my host's disposal.

With the advent of the wet season, however, I was obliged to abandon my primitive mode of living in a tent on the banks of the Mangoky at Ambohibé, for the torrential rains in the interior caused a sudden rise in the river, and one night I was nearly swept bodily with all my goods and chattels into the sea. Having rescued my personal belongings with much difficulty in the inky darkness of the tropical night, I betook myself, a drenched and sorry specimen of humanity, to the young Frenchman's hut. Very courteously, but with merrily twinkling eye, he offered me once more the shelter of his humble roof, and I can assure the reader I was only too glad to accept his hospitality on this occasion.

My stay in Ambohibé, however, has left behind few pleasant recollections. Under the single length of raffia matting which served as



FORDING THE MANGOKY,
Near Dariky, in the dry season.



MY QUARTERS, WHEN HALTING,
On the Mangoky River near Dariky. Vezo Canoeman and servants.

a carpet to the sandy floor of my friend's house, lurked sand-fleas in thousands, and so persistently did they pay me their unwelcome attentions, that I attributed a slight attack of fever to their bites and the ensuing irritation. In addition to this active and vexatious insect (which I christened *Pulex irritans madagascariensis*), I conceived a lively horror of a vicious and venomous centipede of huge dimensions, which is gifted with a positive instinct for emerging from unexpected hiding-places ; and on one occasion, a particularly atrocious member of this species crept out of the lining of my helmet after I had placed it on my head. The picture conjured up may be a ludicrous one, but I can assure the reader that I experienced as lively a dose of the "creeps" during the moments that ensued before I had rid myself of this tormentor, as I have ever experienced over the most ghastly of fiction.

Besides the above-mentioned pests, jiggers, imported by the Senegalese troops, have multiplied exceedingly ; but of all insect scourges, the mosquito is the most dreaded by dwellers in these fever-haunted regions. At dusk, when the sea breeze invariably dies

away, myriads of these disease carriers swarm out of the foetid atmosphere of the mangrove swamps and attack their prey when he is too limp to defend himself, though in the coast regions they are not nearly so voracious as in the up-river districts and in the vicinity of the paddy fields.

When camping near the latter, the evening meal must be finished before sundown, sometimes as early as five o'clock in the afternoon, and precautionary measures taken against the coming onslaught. The head has to be swathed in a gauze veil, the legs from the thigh downwards encased in double gunny sacks, and the air of the living-room rendered obnoxious to the winged enemy by the pungent smoke from a burning palm leaf or smouldering cowdung. The evening brings no pleasurable relaxation to the tired worker, and he is only too glad to retire to his camp-bedstead and try to court slumber behind the security of his mosquito netting.

I do not exaggerate when I say that in some of the low valleys and on the Ile Europa, in the Mozambique Channel, mosquitoes are so numerous that they can literally be brushed off the hands and face !



A HALT AT THE WATER-HOLE,
Casumangabé Mangoky Valley, 1912.

When thoroughly tired of Ambohibé, I caused my canoes to be fitted out for an expedition into the interior, my intention being to follow the main stream of the Mangoky River, for I knew that this voyage would afford me a unique opportunity for studying the fauna and flora of a little-known region and of observing the native life in the remote up-river districts. We therefore stowed an adequate supply of provisions aboard, a quantity of red Malagasy rice for the paddle-men forming a bulky item on the list. Rifles and guns were a necessary part of the equipment, and Vichy water was indispensable, being the only liquid fit for a white man's consumption available. In the bows, the boys stowed their precious cast-iron cooking-pots, the "marmites" so dear to the Sakalava heart. Fortunately, I remembered at the last moment to take my medicine chest, and, as subsequent events will show, it proved an invaluable adjunct on the journey.

The Vezos then bound the pirogues together in pairs with raffia fibre, fitting bamboo cross-pieces on the outriggers, upon which they laid their long, hardwood poles—necessary implements in negotiating the numerous

sandbanks that render the navigation of the Mangoky so difficult. The masts were placed in position in small slots carved out of the hasomolanga keel and fitted with the quaint native-woven sails bearing indigo effigies of humped oxen—blue upon argent.

A stiff south-westerly breeze made the crossing of the open arm of the sea which had to be traversed before we could enter the Tombolava branch of the Mangoky estuary a somewhat risky undertaking, as we should have had to wait several hours in very broken water for the turn of the tide, so we decided to send on the canoes at daybreak with the boys in charge. My companion—A., the young French trader, my erstwhile host (I had persuaded him to accompany me on my journey)—and I elected to struggle on foot across the six miles of sand which skirted the mangroves, and before we had completed our tramp, we had bitterly regretted the decision. The rainy season was fast approaching, and the clammy moisture in the air made the heat so suffocating that we made but slow and painful progress. In addition to the putrescent odour of the mangroves, not at all an exhilarating adjunct to the oppressive atmo-



POOLS OF SILENCE.

sphere, the glare from the bleached sand underfoot became insupportable.

Personally, beyond a feeling of excessive fatigue and an acute sun-headache, I gained the river's mouth in fairly good condition; but my travelling companion collapsed altogether on reaching the boats. He attributed his malaise to sunstroke; but after treating him for this complaint, I discovered that he was suffering from a recurrence of bilious malarial fever peculiar to Madagascar—no auspicious beginning for a journey by water of several weeks' duration.

Having propped him up comfortably in one of the canoes, on a rough couch of empty bean-sacks (the principal freight of all craft bound upstream), we set sail for the interior, and the wind and tide being with us, I reckoned that with close-hauled sails we were making good eight knots an hour. A.'s boy was holding a sun-umbrella over his master in one canoe; whilst I, perched upon the provision cases in the other, kept watch with my glasses for the numerous sandbanks lying in our course. My guns were close at hand, for the river banks teemed with bird life, in which I have always been keenly interested, and as

the Mangoky is alive with crocodiles, I anticipated some exciting sport.

The avian species on this river, moreover, present a most fascinating study to the ornithologist, and are quite different from the feathered inhabitants of an African waterway. In fact, I could not identify more than one out of every six birds that I observed. Tree-ducks (*Dendrocygna viduata*) and guinea-fowl (*Numida mitrata*) were in immense flocks on either bank, and some plump specimens, which I brought down, came as a very welcome addition to our menu of rice and potatoes, for I had not tasted flesh food for nearly a month.

The first thirty miles of the Mangoky calls for slow and skilful piloting through tortuous creeks between dense growths of mangroves, in which reigns Cimmerian darkness, even though a tropical sun beats down in a blaze of blinding light upon the actual waters of the river. As we made tardy progress upstream, my fellow traveller, A., grew steadily worse and finally became delirious, and his Vezo boy seated beside him experienced no little difficulty in preventing him on two or three occasions from jumping

out of the canoe into the crocodile-infested water.

The situation was by no means a pleasant one, and I decided, therefore, to try to reach Dariky before nightfall. With this end in view, I coaxed the Vezos, with promises of increased wages, to make a supreme effort, and they, delighted with the hopes of earning the reward, set to with a will to accomplish the task. I can assure the reader that it was with a feeling of extreme thankfulness that I saw our canoes emerge from the mangroves, just as the sun dipped behind the tamarinds of Dariky and sank, a ball of orange fire, into the purple waters of the far-off Mozambique Channel.

The Vezos drew the flotilla on to a bank of glistening white sand, clear of the mangroves, till their double canoes lay like stranded whales on their sides, and I ran up the steep bank through the reed brake to the village, where, I had heard, a Réunion Creole kept a store. This good-hearted fellow, on hearing of my companion's plight, willingly put his bed (the only one for many miles around) at the sick man's disposal, and as my friend was, by this time, in the

throes of a severe attack of fever, the store-keeper's timely hospitality proved an inestimable boon. Leaving the poor fellow in the kindly charge of his new host, with his Vezo boy to look after him, I betook myself to the white sandy riverside, where I found that my natives had already pitched a rough yet serviceable tent, constructed with the masts and sails belonging to our canoes.

A few drops of rain were falling, and although barely half an hour had elapsed since sunset, the inky darkness of the tropical night shut out the river from our view. As a warm, unwholesome vapour was now rising from the parched earth (on which no rain had fallen for a period of ten months) and creating a general atmosphere of clamminess, I decided to turn in, and had just got into my camp-bed when an unexpected incident occurred. Every one of my native servants entered my tent and insisted on sleeping at the foot of my couch, assuring me that if I permitted them to pass the night there, the crocodile god would not dare to approach them, for although not afraid of spears, he had a great respect for firearms.

It took them some time to convey their

wishes to me, for the Sakalava are past masters in the art of circumlocution, and as I was not particularly anxious to pass the night in the confined atmosphere of a tent with a tribe of unwashed blackamoors huddled at my feet, I was obliged to make many ingenious explanations before I convinced them that they would be perfectly safe outside my tent. Even then, their confidence in my assertions was only won by my discharging my rifle two or three times in the direction of the river as a formal warning to the god that I meant business should he care to put in an appearance.

This man-eating deity, I learnt next day, was a venerable specimen of his kind, and inhabited the barraratty reeds in the neighbourhood of the village, whence he occasionally protruded his snout, to the alarm of the villagers. Only a few days prior to my arrival, he had seized and devoured two little Masikoro girls, taking them unawares while they were washing their lambas in the river, and on the petition of the inhabitants, the Chief of Police at Ambohibé sent a Malagasy rifleman, armed with a '79 Lebel rifle and a whole bandolier full of cartridges,

to try conclusions with this redoubtable pest.

The sable warrior, arriving the day after our advent, made a great show in his khaki jacket and red fez, and displayed his ammunition-covered chest to the admiring Masi-koro beauties, squatting in the shade of the tamarinds. They seemed to interest him a great deal more than the crocodile, and after firing a fusillade of shots wildly into the barraraty reeds fringing the river, he gave himself wholly up to the worship of Venus.

It is with some reluctance that I have to chronicle the fact that the crocodile didn't fall to the rifle of this gallant soldier, and after his departure the villagers entreated me to try my powers on their amphibian enemy. My reputation was at stake; it was "up to me" to bag the reptile, or live on, a mere shadow of my former self! As it was impossible to leave Dariky until my companion's fever had abated (and his temperature was still 103° F.), I thought I would kill time and win undying laurels by accounting for this much-dreaded river-god. So taking my faithful body-servant, Lahipasy, with me, I procured a molanga, or dug-out,

and together we paddled round the many creeks to the west of Dariky in search of our quarry. Several couples of the African humped duck (*Sarcidiornis africana*) rose from every shallow pool and gave me the opportunity of bagging a few females; for though the finely coloured drakes were harder to bring down, I consoled myself with the thought that the ducks would make better eating.

For some hours we kept vigil, and during this weary wait I could not distinguish a sign of a crocodile, but my Mahafaly servant professed to see many protruding eyes where I failed to observe anything at all. At length, cautiously rounding a bend in the stream, we came upon a pool of particularly stagnant water, from which emanated a most foetid odour, and I conjectured that we had arrived at a likely spot, for the crocodile hates anything in the nature of a strong current. We had entered a backwater so filled with decaying reeds and aquatic plants that it was barely navigable, even in our light craft, and on carefully examining the rushes through my glasses, I detected a movement about sixty yards away. The reeds were

apparently floating on a detached piece of sedge towards the middle of the water, when Lahipasy whispered hurriedly :

“Vazaha ! mire Voay-bé maré !” (Stranger ! look at the large crocodile !)

Seizing my Lebel rifle (one of the powerful new-model weapons lent me by a sporting French officer in the colony), I shot point-blank at the water close to the floating rushes, and, as luck would have it, managed to hit the great reptile low in the neck. After a few convulsive movements of his tail, he turned over dead—an unusually speedy ending to a creature that is generally difficult to kill outright. Before the air could leave its body, Lahipasy, heedless of my warning shouts, was in the river up to his arm-pits, and seizing the crocodile, began to drag it along the surface of the water towards the canoe. It was a reckless action on the part of my native, but his excitement had overcome all fear of danger, and all I could do during the anxious moments that preceded his return to the canoe was to keep a sharp look-out for the approach of any hungry relative of the deceased.

Securing the body with a stout raffia rope



BEAN PLANTATION IN FULL POD.



THE CROCODILE OF DARIKY.

to the canoe, we took our prize in tow. To have hauled it into the dug-out would have been imprudent, for the crocodile is "fady" (taboo) to the Vezos, and such an action would have rendered the craft unclean in their eyes, and given rise to awkward complications. On reaching terra firma, we measured the brute, and found that from the tip of his snout to the end of his serrated tail he was sixteen feet in length. On his ancient head, five rush plants had taken root in the accumulation of river mud which reposed thereon, and dissection revealed three Sakalava bangles of Indian workmanship, a string of coral beads, and a broken spear-head, evidence of his partiality for human kind.

The news of my prowess spread like wildfire through the village, and the chief with the ombiasy (sorcerer), accompanied by a delighted crowd of Masikoros, paid me a sort of ceremonial visit to thank me for my public service. After drawing every tooth in the reptile's head, they made such a fuss of me that, unable to bear the weight of this sudden acquisition of glory, I took to the water in one of my canoes, having first made

the excuse that I was going to shoot some ducks for the Creole who was nursing A. As the Masikoros, unlike the Vezos, dislike the river intensely, I was left in peace.

Afterwards the ombiasy (sorcerer) expressed his regrets that I had been annoyed by the well-meant attentions of his people, but explained that I was the first vazaha "Anglais" that his countrymen had ever seen. On my asking him in what way I differed from the vazaha "Français," he imparted to me the amusing information that my East African pattern of sun-helmet had created a most favourable impression, and was considered a remarkably fine head-covering by his people.

During my stay here there was a full moon, and to celebrate this occurrence the natives indulged in a moon-feast, to which I was invited as a very special guest. As far as I can deduce from what occurred, a moon-feast is an occasion for the adolescent Sakalava of both sexes "going on the loose," to put it in an expressive phrase. Dancing constituted a principal part of the entertainment, and was performed to the maddening accompaniment of the inevitable tom-toms.



"BHAG" AND "MORENGY" DANCING.

Sakalava festival, Tulcar.

On this occasion I had fortunately brought my gramophone with me, intending to try its effects on these primitive people, and its success exceeded my wildest expectations. In fact, it was considered the event of the evening, and the Masikoros in awed tones maintained that the sound was being created by the spirits of all the crocodiles that I had killed. When the disk provided a rag-time dance, the natives kept up a lively staccato movement in perfect time; and I shall never forget the effect of the *Merry Widow Waltz*. Immediately the catchy tune became evident, they kept up a gently swaying motion with their walnut-coloured bodies, and the sight of some fifty or sixty of them responding dreamily to the melody, all bathed in brilliant moonlight and against a background of tropical foliage, was one full of a bizarre charm and a strangely haunting mystery.

The height of their enthusiasm, however, was reserved for Harry Lauder's comic song "Will ye stop your ticklin', Jock?" over which they simply shrieked with delight, and whenever the trumpet recorded Lauder's infectious laugh, their mirth was quite uncontrollable! I was so interested in the effect of this instru-

ment upon the merry-makers, that it was early morning before I quitted the scene.

The quantity of "toak"—a drink distilled from palm leaves—that was imbibed during this festive evening was enormous, and led to an altercation between two of the young "bloods" of the village over the possession of a dark-skinned beauty. They decided to settle the matter by wrestling in native fashion, and there followed a most spirited and vicious bout, the quickness, agility, and dexterity of the combatants rendering the combat a most interesting one to witness.

These wrestling bouts, however, do not always conclude the dispute, and the disputants generally have recourse to their spears to settle the difference, advancing against one another with a broad-bladed assegai in the left hand and a narrow-bladed weapon in the right. The victor generally puts an end to the contest by plunging the right-handed blade into his opponent's neck and the left-handed one into his ribs; but why two weapons are considered necessary to dispatch a man, I have never been able satisfactorily to ascertain.

Long after I had retired to my camp-bed,

I heard the throbbing of tom-toms, brought to me by fitful gusts of wind, and no doubt, after my departure, the affair developed into a carnal orgy of the worst description—the usual termination of one of these entertainments.

When A. had sufficiently recovered, we continued our journey up-stream, and with a favourable wind and a weak down-stream current, made good progress, though twice we ran aground on treacherous sandbanks in the river. On these occasions, we were one and all obliged to leap out of our canoes and push with utmost vigour before we could regain the deep-water channel, and during these wading operations the risk of stumbling on some lurking crocodile was no imaginary one.

As we left the coast farther and farther behind, the heat became more and more intense. The fierce rays of the sun burned the pattern of my shirt on to the flesh of my shoulders and back, and heated my head appreciably through the thick pith of an East African sun-helmet. In our zinc-lined provision cases, the French *pâté de foie gras* melted to a substance resembling lubricating

oil, in spite of the insulating straw packing round the air-tight porcelain tureens. Photographic films were rendered useless, and the smokeless powder in my shot-gun cartridges deteriorated to such an extent that I was obliged to use the common black "poudre de chasse française." Fortunately, I had remembered to bring several tins of this powder, together with the necessary loading appliances, along with me, otherwise, the extremely welcome addition of palatable wildfowl stews would have been missing from our menu.

Whenever I had occasion to go ashore and climb up the steep river-banks (the stream here rises some fifty feet in the wet season), I felt the heat of the sun-baked earth burn quite uncomfortably through the hempen soles of my boots. (I may here remark that leathern footwear is impracticable in this portion of Madagascar on account of the voracity of ants and cockroaches, to whom a pair of boots, or even a leather trunk or bag, comes as a specially dainty morsel.)

All along the narrow strip of arable land immediately next the river, the manioc looked parched and withered, the stalks of the guinea-corn were white brittle sticks, and the



A HAMLET AT A VILLAGE
On the way to the lumber.

only living creature visible was the big kite (*Milvus aegyptius*) hovering high overhead in the coppery blue sky. The crops of butter-beans surrounded the dry-weather huts of the Masikoros, but even this heat-loving plant was already shrivelled, and its golden pods, splitting in the noonday furnace, cast forth the ivory-white fruit in little heaps on the earth, whence the Sakalava children gathered them hastily into their lambas before the village pigs could devour them. Great activity was manifest throughout the district, for the pecuniary advances on the crops had been made during the time of the floods, many months previously, and the honest Masikoros were hastening to discharge their obligations.

This portion of the Mangoky constitutes an important bean district, and hither I had journeyed to obtain some insight into the source and method of production ; but as the *Phaseolus capensis* forms such a prominent feature of the commerce of the western side of the island, I have devoted a separate chapter to a description of the curiously primitive cultivation and transportation of this increasingly valuable foodstuff.

At Bekapilo, A., now in somewhat better health, decided to discontinue his journey and await my return, while I pushed on up-stream and explored the higher reaches of the river. The country through which I passed above this village is extremely uninteresting ; a flat sandy desert prevails on either bank, with the heights of the Isalo mountains lying like a blue smudge on the far horizon. The monotony of the vista is only broken by an occasional tamarind tree, a dry-weather hut of a Masikoro, or a thicket of reeds, bamboo, bulrushes, and barraratty. At Beturatsy and Vondrové a little forest is seen on the left bank, and at the former village, the river banks are no longer of sand but of rock.

Between Beturatsy and Beroroha, there lies a further belt of flat marshy and sandy country, and above the latter town the scenery changes, and the bamboos and barraratty foliage give place to the larger leaved trees of the tropical forest with its network of *Landolphia* vines. Here the river has cut great gorges in the hard volcanic rock, and the scenery is very beautiful, although, owing to the scanty covering of laterite, the vegetation is not as luxurious as one would expect

BETSHIEO WOMAN.

From the Central Plateau. Note the method of dressing the hair as opposed to Salkahaya knots.



YOUNG BARA BOY,
Isalo Mountains,



it to be. The inhabitants were now no longer of the Sakalava race, but belonged to the more primitive and unkempt Bara tribe.

A stranger experiences great difficulty in obtaining food when travelling through the Bara country ; he may proffer hard cash in vain, for the natives have an innate distrust of a white man. A pig, the scavenger of the village, I could always purchase ; but although acceptable to the omnivorous Antaimoro carriers, or Vezo canoe-boys, pork is generally shunned by a European in this part of the island. On the east coast it is different, and quite good ham can be cured from the maize-fed porkers to the south-east of Tananarivo.

A Bara is, moreover, always loth to part with his chickens or Muscovy ducks, while to bargain for an ox entails a "cabary" (palaver) lasting a whole week, unless a festival of some kind is in progress. Thus one has often to rely on powder and shot to provide the daily meals, with a disastrous tendency to avoid all sporting shots and to confine oneself to aiming solely at "sure sitters." This procedure, however, is pardonable when it is impossible to replenish either the stores or ammunition supply.

The situation was all the more galling for we were within sight of vast herds of cattle, fat and sleek and worshipped, thousands of which would have been remorselessly slain in an idle sacrifice had a native chieftain fallen ill or died. The Baras prize glass ornaments highly, and have a particular liking for coloured glass bottles—so much so, that the first white man to reach the Upper Mangoky Valley made his fortune by exchanging empty glass bottles for fully grown oxen.

Excepting the military post of Beroroha, there is not one single settlement of any importance along the entire course of the Mangoky. This town (if it can be called such) lies opposite the native village of Fanjaka (authority), about 120 miles from Ambohibé. Several hundred miles higher up in the mountains, where the river rises, there is the larger post of Fanjakana in the Betsileo country. The members of this tribe are far more intelligent and less barbarous than the Baras, and have become adepts in the arts of mat-weaving and lace-making, which were introduced by missionaries in the seventeenth century. The Betsileos wear their hair in long plaits, and on their heads appears a



A. BARA CHIEF,
Of a village near Beroroha Mangoky River.



OMBIASY,
A Malagasy sorcerer (priest) of the Bara tribe,
Upper Mangoky Valley.

strange network of white lines, which is effected by cutting away the hair with a piece of broken glass or a sharp fragment of stone.

Owing to the difficulties encountered on the way, on reaching the borders of the Betsileo country, I decided to turn back and commence the journey down-stream.

No incident of any unusual interest occurred while travelling southwards until within twenty miles of Bekapilo, when I had an adventure which more than made up for the uneventfulness of the days that preceded it, and had it not been for the faithfulness of Manjalifa, wife of Marajy, my canoe-man, I should probably not be alive to-day to pen these lines. Curiously enough, Manjalifa had made my acquaintance through a very painful accident, for whilst splitting hardwood for a fire in her native village, a splinter had entered her left eye, and as the nearest doctor was at Morondava, some hundreds of miles away, recourse to him was impossible.

Hearing of my presence up-river, her parents brought her to my camp, but unfortunately at the time I was away shooting. They waited for my return, however, and on my arrival, asked me if I could do anything

to relieve the agony which their daughter was suffering. The only instrument I had at hand was my ornithological forceps of nickel steel, but after some trouble I succeeded in extracting the splinter, her parents having first rendered the girl comatose by application to the forehead of a decoction made from the leaves of one of the Apocynaceæ. The nature of this preparation I was never able to discover, though I persistently questioned my boys and the natives with whom I came in contact, and it is probably one of the secret remedies so common among all primitive tribes. Although I had done my unskilled best, poor Manjalifa lost the sight of her eye, but I believe my timely assistance warded off mortification of the injured optic and saved the other eye.

Manjalifa's mother, to show her gratitude for my kindness, asked me if her daughter might become my slave, as she and her husband were too poor to give me cattle. I told her that she was under no obligation to me, and that I never employed slaves; but the girl Manjalifa persisted in staying in my camp, and doing little odd jobs for me, such as washing and mending my clothes. Marajy,



BARA MOTHERS,
Upper Mangoky Valley.

my canoeman, who was the Don Juan of the company, married her, and thus it came about that she accompanied me on my journey up the Mangoky.

To return to my story, one afternoon, when encamped on a sandbank in mid-stream, I noticed that Manjalifa seemed very restless and seized every pretext to be near me. My suspicions roused, I asked her what she wanted, and gradually managed to elicit from her the unpleasant information that my boys had planned to take my life that night and relieve me of the boxes of bullion which I always carried with me for trading purposes. They could not agree, however, as to the manner in which they were to put an end to me, some being in favour of spearing me to death, others of administering a dose of poison in my food. The question was put to the vote, and cold steel was decided upon as the quicker and surer method. Lahipasy was won over by the promise of my fire-arms, and Manjalifa was to receive for her silence half the silver bullion to be melted down for silver bangles. They themselves were to share my gold between them.

On learning this disquieting news, I was

naturally somewhat perturbed, and kept sending Manjalifa to the boys' camp on some errand or other, so that I might be well posted as to the plan of attack. In the meantime, I made every preparation to put up a "stiff fight," should they attempt to carry out their plot. Marajy, who was loyal to me and would not hear of robbery with violence, they conveniently silenced by putting drugs into his "toak" (liquor) in sufficient quantity to render him unconscious for hours.

Towards nightfall, I loaded all my rifles and shotguns, and, unknown to the plotters, sent Manjalifa in a dug-out down-river to the nearest Creole's store to warn him of the plot, for I knew that if the natives were successful in doing away with me, they would pillage the whole district, for a Malagasy with firearms in his hands is a demoniacal fiend, whose ingenuity in the torture of a white man is terrible to think of.

When night fell, I turned in as usual, and ostentatiously bade Lahipasy secure my mosquito-curtains about me. At this moment either Lahipasy's courage must have failed him, or his sense of right overcome

his greed for a share of the booty, for coming close to my camp-bed, he whispered, "Vazaha, take care, for the crocodiles are many and vicious on this bank at night." I nodded and appeared to slumber, but in reality I was fully alive to the situation, and had an automatic pistol in my hand beneath the clothes ready for instant action, while my loaded rifles were all beneath my bed.

At 10 p.m. the moon rose pale and hazy through the vapours rising off the riverside swamps, and I became aware of a sudden stir among the canoemen's cooking-fires. When they were within some thirty or forty yards of my tent, I deemed it high time for action, and without taking particular aim, sent a bullet from my Mauser into the advancing band. The shot, by a lucky chance, carried away the broad prongs of a fish-spear that the leader, a great strapping Antaimoro, carried in his right hand, and so absolutely taken by surprise were the cowardly gang, that they promptly fled and left their captain to his fate. Before the latter could recover his wits, I had dashed out of my tent and was upon him, and seeing that he was at my mercy, he promptly grovelled at

my feet, protesting that he had merely come to guard the vazaha from the crocodile gods.

I then shouted for Lahipasy, who finally came to my call looking very sheepish and guilty. With his aid I bound the Antaimoro to a stake near the water's edge for the rest of the night, and a more scared human being I have never seen in my life. In fact, so sure was he that he would be devoured by crocodiles that he gibbered to Lahipasy all his plans for the disposal of his scanty personal effects.

Of course, I had no intention of allowing the man to meet such a horrible fate, but remembering that, but for Manjalifa's faithfulness, I should probably have been done to death by this very villain's spear, I was determined to impress the scoundrel with the heinousness of his offence. However, unknown to the Antaimoro, I warned Lahipasy, who was now thoroughly penitent, to keep guard and warn me in ample time should any danger threaten; but, personally, I was quite confident that the man was perfectly safe, for a crocodile never attacks a human being out of water.

At day-break, I went over to the boys' camp, and found that most of them had fled; but the few who remained I thoroughly scared by a list of the pains and penalties that I would inflict, if they ever gave me any more trouble.

Towards midday, Manjalifa arrived with a fierce-looking native militia guard, and under this soldier's care I sent the ring-leader down to Ambohibé, promising to give evidence of the charge on my return to that port. On the way thither, however, the Antaimoro, either through the guard's connivance or lack of vigilance, managed to make good his escape; but I have always felt that the punishment I meted out to him previous to his departure in some measure recompensed him for his evil deeds.

On reaching Bekapilo, I discovered that A. had had a relapse, and that the nature of his illness pointed to the dreaded blackwater fever, so common in this portion of Madagascar. To help my friend over the critical period of his indisposition was my first aim, and I depleted my medicine-chest in so doing, but was rewarded, after many weary vigils, in seeing him enter the convalescent

stage at last, albeit in a terribly emaciated and weakened condition.

Now, the nearest place where I could hope to replenish my stock of vitally necessary drugs was at Manja (some sixty miles distant as the crow flies), at which post, if I were lucky enough to meet a travelling Government surgeon, I might be able to beg a few of my most urgent requirements. To Manja I decided to go, so, having made all provisions for A.'s safety and comfort, I took his Somali pony,¹ and with two runners started out to cross the vast extent of intervening swamp, generally passable in the dry season, but forming the bed of the overflowing waters of the Mangoky during the rains of January.

Some twenty miles east-south-east of Manja fort, we came upon the first rice-fields, unlimited swarms of voracious mosquitoes, and some welcome herds of wild cattle. I

¹ When we left Ambohibé at the commencement of our journey, we sent some of our baggage, together with A.'s Somali pony, up country by the bridle-paths in the vicinity of the river. A. had bought this white pony at Djibouti some months previously, and had it shipped to Ambohibé, the transport costing him four times the amount paid for the animal.



THE END OF THE CHASE.
A wild bull near Manja.

couldn't resist giving chase to the last-mentioned, and after an exciting hunt, managed to bag a fine bull, which weighed over 9 cwt., or 460 kilos. For the most part, the country which I traversed on this journey was bleak and uninhabited, the only verdure being supplied by impenetrable thickets of bamboo, of which the sole denizen was the river-hog.

At Manja fort, I heard that the officer in charge had just succumbed to blackwater fever (a European usually dies forty-eight hours after contracting the illness), and, to my chagrin, I was not successful in my quest for supplies of drugs. I had not journeyed in vain, however, and managed to purchase a dilapidated camp-bedstead, upon which to transport my enfeebled friend A. down to the coast. Owing to the long prevalence of drought, there was a famine in the land, and I was unable to purchase rice; but somehow or other my boys managed to secure a fresh stock, by purchase, they said, but I blush to relate that I strongly suspected theft, yet so urgent were matters, that I deemed it wise to retrace my steps without inquiring more closely into the affair.

On my return to Bekapilo, which I reached after three days and nights of forced marching, I resolved to journey to Befandriana, on the other side of the Mangoky, and see if I could obtain my requirements there. If successful, my intention was to hie back to Bekapilo and descend the river with A. at all costs. In passing through a village on the way to Befandriana, I was much amused at the terrific consternation I created among the natives, the majority of whom had never seen a horse before, and none of whom had ever encountered a pure white animal. So scared or impressed were they, that they brought me their children as an offering, though they refused to sell me any of their cattle, which is instructive, showing that they value their offspring less than their kine. I thereupon became the vazahabé, the much-feared white stranger, throughout the whole district.

Foolishly going out of my way to shoot some specimens of that peculiarly interesting bird the "cock of the woods" (see notes on fauna) in the scrub fringing the desert-like plains, I managed to lose my way, and ran out of both food and water. After much



A KEE AT HIGH MANGORY.

Near the Idaho foothills.



weary wandering, however, I regained the village in which I had made such a great impression, and renouncing all ideas of reaching Befandriana, made all haste back to Bekapilo. Finding, to my joy, that A. was well enough to travel, I commenced the down-river journey, and the current being in our favour, progress was rapid and uneventful.

At Befamouty, a village of six huts on the right bank of the Mangoky, we made the acquaintance of an ex-manager of one of the largest European banking-houses, and he, after entertaining us right royally, induced us to camp one night on the sandy river-bank in front of his ramshackle abode. Married to a Betsimisaraka woman, he earned a precarious living by making pecuniary advances to the Masikoros, in competition with the Gujerati money-lenders, and filled in his many lengthy periods of business inactivity by scientific study of the botanical features of the Mangoky Valley. His was the simple life indeed, his house being of the most primitive description, and all his cooking being done in the open air !

At daybreak next day, I went crocodile shooting with him up a tributary of the main

stream, and together we accounted for 130 of these reptiles, which his natives skinned with great dexterity. Such an adept with the rifle had my host become, through following up this sport, that he could again and again knock a piece of lump-sugar off the top of a bottle at a hundred yards' distance without breaking the bottle's neck. During the afternoon we bagged 87 sand-grouse and 353 wildfowl of various sorts, mostly humped-and tree-duck.

There was much feasting and merry-making in the village that night, for we only retained the mitred guinea-fowl for our own use.

As A. was not capable of enduring the fatigue of a continuous voyage to Ambohibé, to enable him better to withstand the poisonous vapours of the mangrove swamps, which in the ordinary course of events we should have entered on the third day, I decided to halt again at Dariky. There, we stayed two days, and I spent my time in closely examining the conditions under which the Masikoros grow their rich crops of *phaseolus* (butter-beans); but I was adversely impressed by the poor condition of their tick-infested cattle, in contrast with the

superb condition of the sleek and healthy animals of the up-river districts.

We reached Ambohibé without any further incident, all our party safe and sound, with the exception of A. (who, as the reader knows, was convalescent from fever), and the wife of one of my canoemen, who, on the day of my shooting expedition at Befamouty, had been seized by a crocodile and dragged under before her companion's assegais could reach the brute. This unhappy accident threw a gloom over the company for a day or so, and though I myself could not erase the incident from my mind, the natives, with childlike carelessness, soon forgot all about the affair.

The last night of the homeward voyage was through the ghostly vapours of the tortuous creeks of moonlit mangroves. Imagine the procession of our silently moving canoes floating down-stream ; the Vezos chanting their moaning dirges, the white men furiously puffing their calabash pipes to render innocuous the inhalation of those foetid miasmas. Now and then, a large fish, attracted by the lanterns in the bows, would leap with a silvery flash into the canoe, and

the Vezos would rejoice lustily, till the sombre mangroves rang again with their joyous shouts. The dancing fireflies, the reflection of the brilliant tropical stars, swimming oilily on the water, the softly flitting shadows of the night herons, the booming of the hidden bitterns, combined to produce an effect which is graven on my memory for life.

On arrival at Ambohibé, we found, to our consternation, that by an error of judgment we had landed some six miles north of the delta on which the village lies. Further progress in our river-canoes was not practicable, as the sea was rough and our course uncertain, so drawing up the flotilla upon the mud, we burdened our boys with the cargo, and trudged wearily through the deep sand to the militia barracks, which we reached in the early hours of morning.

Two days later, the Messageries coasting-steamer hove-to outside the bar, and I can assure the reader that neither A. nor I were loth to quit that unhealthy network of sandy swamp and waste which lies at the mouth of the Mangoky. Tuléar was reached after a very stormy night's steaming, the

steamer pitching on her beam-ends in the trough of a hurricane from the south; and though Tuléar can hardly be called a health-resort, it was with infinite relief that I deposited A. in the care of the military authorities at this place. Poor fellow! since the date of our journey up the Mangoky, he has succumbed to that bane of Western Madagascar—blackwater fever!

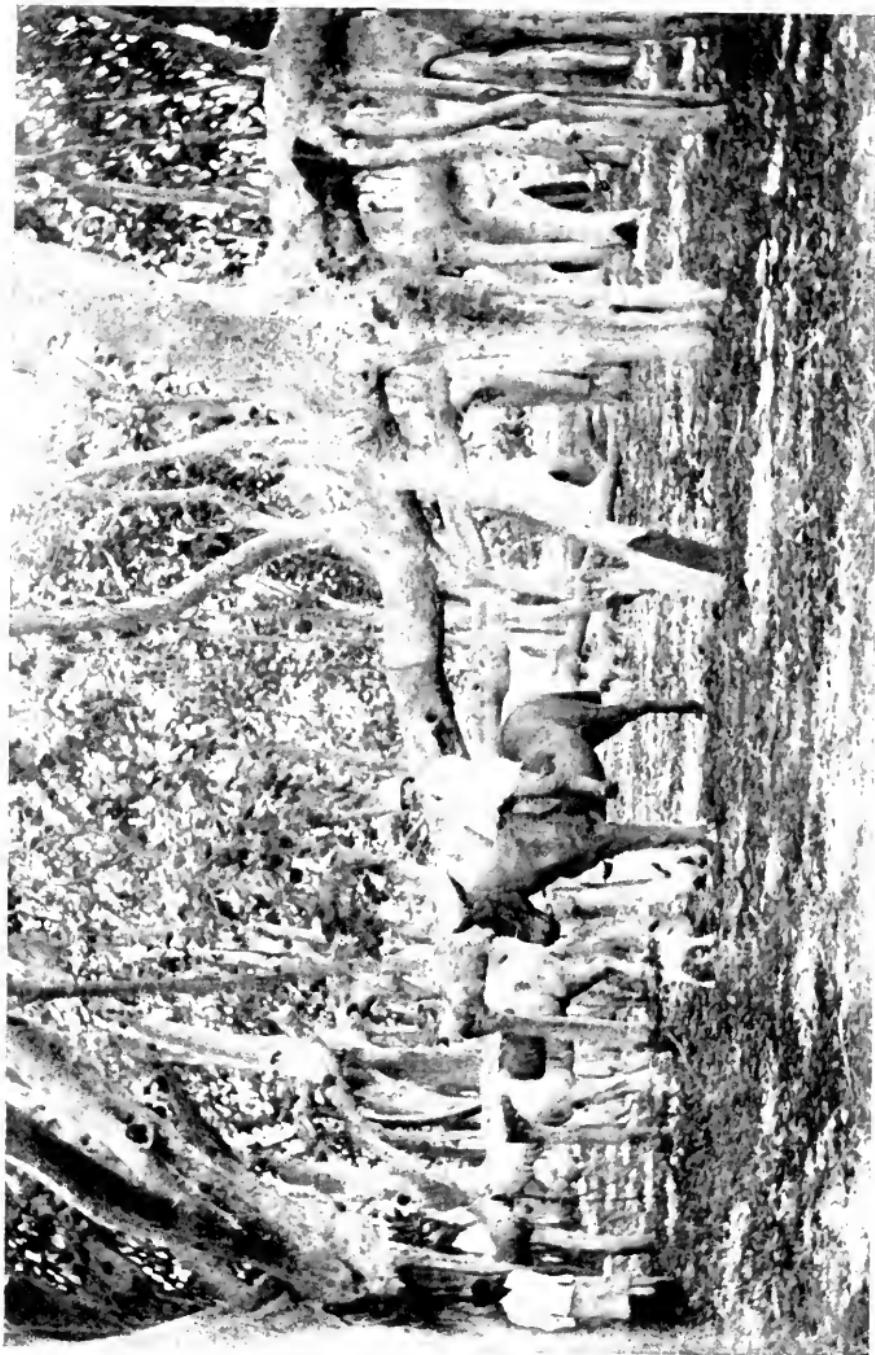
The total length of the Mangoky is about 380 miles, but in its upper reaches in the Bara country it is known as the Matsiatra. Except for the two or three very insignificant native villages that I have mentioned in the foregoing narrative, the banks are uninhabited and the surrounding country desolate in the extreme, so that the traveller intending to survey these regions must carry a very complete camp equipment. In the lower country, the river is half a mile to a mile wide in the dry season and double that distance during the rains. At this period the Mangoky broadens out into a mighty stream, its swirling eddies sweeping down to the sea many dead cattle, great tree-trunks, and enormous quantities of bright yellow sand.

At present, the country upon both banks

of the river is innocent of the rudest method of irrigation, but the main-stream could be effectively and inexpensively dammed, and such a work would enable profitable crops of many kinds of tropical and sub-tropical produce to be grown. The climate throughout the valley is, however, extremely hot and generally unhealthy, malarial fever being constantly present among the natives, but the Sakalava seem to have become inured to the disease and are comparatively little affected by it. It is quite different with the Antimerina; when they come down to trade they succumb with appalling suddenness to an attack. The average European is more resistent, though chronic paludism weakens the constitution and renders it liable to blackwater fever, especially if one fails to observe the rules of health, so necessary to the well-being of a white man living in the tropics.

The Mangoky must not be confounded with the Onilahy, which flows parallel to it some 170 miles farther south, for by a strange coincidence the latter, rising in the Zafindravola country, about 80 miles south of Betroka, is called the Mangoka close to its source.

THE GREAT BANYAN TREE, TUOEAR PLAIN.



CHAPTER IV

TULÉAR AND THE ONILAHY RIVER

THE great coral reef, lying four miles distant from the mouth of the trickling Fiheranana stream, is conspicuously marked by the still-protruding iron bows of a long-forgotten steamer's wreck, which reminds the traveller of similar sights encountered upon entering port at Mombasa, or coming to anchor off Zanzibar. In all these places King Coral has exacted his dread port dues, so that we find the stern of a coasting vessel at Tuléar, the entire hull of an Anglo-Indian tramp at Mombasa, and the yacht-like bows of a cable-boat high and dry on the reef off Zanzibar.

As is common in these waters, the entry to the roadstead of Tuléar can only be accomplished in broad daylight, and even then it is a somewhat perilous undertaking, owing to the narrowness of the break in the

coral rock and the tremendous flow of the tide. To the newcomer, it is a mystery how the natives can manœuvre their craft through what at first sight appears to be the foaming surf of the Indian Ocean breakers spending their fury on the reef. On approaching the rocks, however, channels are to be seen running obliquely through the wall of coral, and hence the optical illusion afforded by the frail pirogues with their absurd sails apparently passing through the solid surf-lined barrier reef.

The practised eye of the Vezo can discern a "pass" at a distance of several miles, when a white man perceives not the least sign of a break in the coral. Indeed, the skill of these coastal Malagasies is always a source of wonder to the European, and in all my embarkings and disembarkings I trusted myself implicitly in their hands. Knowing, however, that on every such occasion he is running the risk of a subsequent transmutation into shark, the European seldom takes kindly to the trying ordeal.

Nor is his knowledge of the pirogue calculated to lessen his fears, for when struck broadside-on by a powerful roller they will

sometimes split up the keel like a snapped walnut-shell. Moreover, the wood from which they are dug out, though wonderfully watertight, is so spongy and soft that one's finger can be pushed half through the side of the craft without any great exertion, and a nail can be thrust through by hand as easily as if the substance were cheese.

The Vezos, however, are perfectly at home on the water and in it, and are wonderfully strong swimmers. I have seen them put out to sea towards night (when the land-breeze freshens), and after passing the night fishing on the rough water, return with the sea-breeze in the morning. The women-folk handle these craft as capably as their mates, and on several occasions I have seen a pirogue making seawards in charge of the wife, while the husband lay peacefully dozing on the outrigger with the water lapping about him.

Tuléar consists for the greater part of shabby-looking bungalows with galvanised iron roofs, and its surroundings seem to belong rather to the Red Sea coast than to that of the Southern Indian Ocean. A heat haze hangs continuously above the settlement, and a constant mirage is to be

seen floating between the coast and "Table" mountain in the background. On the fore-shore, an attempt has recently been made to build a limestone jetty out through the highly odoriferous yellow mud which the changed course of the Fihiranana has deposited to a depth of several feet, but, unhappily, the sole result of this work has been to cause the ooze to accumulate faster, instead of being washed away by the ebb and flow of the tide; and now a promising little mangrove swamp is springing up in front of the principal merchants' residences and go-downs, whereas three or four years ago, the little coasting steamers were unloaded upon the quay, alongside which they could lie in all weathers. Nowadays, it is quite impossible to reach the mail-steamer from the shore at low tide, and the following incident will furnish some idea of the difficulty of embarkation.

A merchant from Majunga and I had come down from the interior, intending to embark at once for Durban and civilisation, but, alas for our hopes! it blew a gale from the south all day, and there was no craft in Tuléar that could possibly have crossed

the three miles of storm-swept sea that separated us from our steamer. One thing, however, provided a grain of comfort—the mails had not been shipped by the agents; so my fellow-traveller and I took turns in watching those precious canvas bags, lest they should put off without us. The wind, on the other hand, showed no signs of abating, and at sundown blew with as great a velocity as ever, filling our eyes with fine dust and rendering life miserable on these barren sand-dunes.

At this juncture Captain R., of the French Colonial Infantry, who had dined with us at the only hostelry in the place, very kindly offered me the Government canoe, manned by six stalwart tirailleurs, on condition that we turned back if the water proved too rough beyond the reef—not that he was afraid of losing his native soldiers (they are never drowned), but he would not hold himself responsible for our safety. We were now joined by the ship's doctor (the only member of the ship's personnel ashore), who was bent on returning to the vessel *coûte que coûte*. The undertaking, however, did not strike him as a particularly exhilarating one,

for in trying to reach Tuléar that morning, the native canoe he had hailed had been driven by the storm seven miles to the north of the town, a mishap which had obliged him to perform the rest of the journey on foot.

The Captain of the mail-boat now began to blow his siren intermittently as a call to his medicine-man, without whom he dared not weigh anchor, so I suggested hazarding the crossing in the garrison canoe. To this the doctor agreed, but the French merchant could not summon up sufficient courage; so taking leave of him, and thanking Captain R. for his kindness, we essayed to make a start. The Malagasy soldiers, stripped and wading knee-deep in the stinking slime, carried their great canoe through the mud until she just floated, and the doctor, on seeing this performance, remarked, "Comment faire nous autres?" (he was a Breton, too!)

I preferred to paddle through as the natives had done, and putting my valuables in the lining of my helmet, I managed to reach the canoe, though in a shocking condition, my drill suit dyed a greenish grey,



NATIVES BATHING IN THE HOT SPRINGS, ONONDAGA VALLEY.

and giving off a strong sickly odour of squashed marigolds. Suddenly, a series of ear-piercing yells came across the water, and shouting to the nearest native to hurry back and ascertain the cause (for I could not see in the dark), I kept the canoe in the fairway.

A few moments afterwards, the cry of “*Au secours ! au secours !*” rang out, but this time closer at hand. Turning shorewards, I saw a sight which sent me into fits of laughter. A very tall corporal of the tirailleurs had the doctor suspended by the heels, while a shorter soldier held his neck, and, as luck would have it, the smaller man had suddenly sunk to his waist in a patch of soft ooze, whereas his long companion stood on a bed of firm sand. Hence the poor Frenchman was in a most uncomfortable position, and, to add to his discomfiture, a sum of money in five-franc pieces, entrusted to his care by friends on shore and intended for the purser, was slowly dropping, piece by piece, out of his trousers’ pocket into the water. Yet so great was his horror of wading, that he urged on the natives by an exhaustive range of threats and bribes to

carry him quickly to the boat, and finally we hoisted him aboard more dead than alive.

Promising the paddlemen a bottle of rum each to encourage them to do their best, we set out, and eventually gained the steamer's ladder without further adventure. The sea had by now gone down appreciably, and two hours afterwards (5 a.m.), we were astonished to see a pirogue put off in the first light of dawn from Besakoa, a village to the south of Tuléar. We were on the point of sailing when this canoe reached us, and whom should it contain but the French merchant that we had left behind some hours previously! He came aboard in a state of great exhaustion, and explained that it had taken him half the night to procure another canoe, and then it was only by a promise of payment in gold that he had finally caught the mail-boat.

Tuléar is by no means a pleasure-resort for a white man, and it is a matter of extreme difficulty to obtain any exercise or recreation at all, unless one plays tennis on the very rough pseudo-cement courts behind the sand-dunes, surrounded by hedges of prickly pear. Walking is out of the question ; on the sea-

front the disagreeable smell of the mud and the voracity of the mosquitoes render a stroll unbearable, and elsewhere the deep sand and total lack of water make it impossible for man or beast to travel anything approaching a long distance without carrying all the paraphernalia of a caravan.

Riding is impossible, for the cogent reason that there are no horses, on account of an absence of fodder to feed them; and though mules do well, they are scarce and extremely difficult to obtain. I am surprised that the camel has not been introduced into Southern Madagascar, for this animal would be an eminently suitable beast of burden in the vast sandy plains forming that portion of the island, where also the Barbary fig and cacti would no doubt furnish it with ample means of subsistence.

With such a scarcity of healthy relaxations, life in this sun-scorched settlement tends to become dismally monotonous, so that the reader can well imagine the delight with which I hailed the proposition of a German resident to spend a day, fishing in the native fashion on the main reef across the bay. My boys awoke me next morning at 2.30 a.m.,

and although the thermometer stood at 73° F., I felt distinctly chilly as I emerged from my bungalow into the clear, starlit night. The tide being out, we had to be carried out to the pirogues which were to ferry us to a useful-looking twenty-ton schooner, of which the designer and owner was my amiable friend from Schleswig-Holstein. The land-breeze still held, and we reached the reef as the sun rose in all its tropical glory above "La Table," a flat-topped mountain at the eastern extremity of the Tuléar Plain.

The sight from the schooner's bows as the day broke was enchanting ; in four fathoms of water every single detail upon the bed of the ocean stood out in relief as if seen through a crystal lens. The bastard coral had grown into all sorts of fantastic shapes of every imaginable hue, and never before had I had the good fortune to gaze on such an exquisite exhibition of marine colouring. Light blue merged into mauve and vivid purple, lemon-yellow into orange and bright vermillion, and huge blood-red star-fish were quite eclipsed by the glistening brilliance of the parrot-beaked scaridæ, whose scales exhibited all the colours of the rainbow on a ground of

shining saffron. The powerful beak-like jaws of these fish enable them to feed on the coral rock, and for some reason or other, the Vezos classify them as unsuitable for the Vazahas' consumption, at least they would not allow me to eat them.

In the deeper water beyond the reef, great sea-slugs (*Holothuria*), locally called trepangs, lay still on the sandy floor of the ocean, and a considerable export trade is done with China in this commodity, for dried sea-slugs are considered an epicurean delicacy in the Celestial empire.

A magnificent solar halo now became visible, and in contrast to the usual clearness of the atmosphere, an extraordinary blue haze obscured the landward view. Through the mist "La Table" loomed like a giant purple mushroom.

We stayed on the schooner's deck, watching the green-and-gold parrot-fish darting after one another through the labyrinth of brightly hued rock, until the sun became too powerful, when I decided to bathe. This, too, in spite of the danger from sharks, for the temptation to dive into those cool, crystalline depths was irresistible. The skipper was somewhat

uneasy, but the reader will understand my craving for a dip, when I explain that my water-supply on shore had to be brought from Saavedrano by pirogue, a distance of eighteen miles across the bay. In calm weather, an inch of brackish and lukewarm water at the bottom of a leaky wine-cask might be available for the daily ablution, but in times of strong southerly winds (a frequent occurrence), this water-supply would be cut off for days, and the offensive local liquid was not fit even for washing purposes.

As soon as the tide reached its fullest ebb, we took to the little pirogues, and attaching our assortment of fearfully sharp and weirdly shaped fish-spears to the outriggers, made for the shoal water about a mile to windward of the schooner. On reaching the end of the lagoon, the Vezos sprang from their canoes, each with his spear gracefully poised above his head, while we tried to imitate them, retaining, however, our hempen sand-boots and breeches of strong canvas as a protection against the jagged coral. Every now and then a spear would hurtle through the air, rarely, if ever, missing its mark; and some idea of the native's keen vision and accuracy

of aim may be gathered from the fact that we were generally unable to discern the faintest shimmer of a fish.

After a while, the sea receded from the reef, leaving only the swirling eddies, resulting from the ocean swell, breaking to seaward. Circular and limpid pools formed here and there, generally with a large rock rising from the centre, and around these coral islets the natives spread their drift-nets, thus enclosing the whole of these miniature lagoons. Once the circle of meshes was complete, the fun grew fast and furious ; barbed spear-heads descended with incredible rapidity, always returning with great fish neatly gaffed by the gills. The victims were thrown into one canoe or other, according to whether it was " fia malgache " or " fia vazaha," *i.e.* native's fish or stranger's fish.

During this excitement, a most amusing incident occurred. One of the Vezos had transfixed an unusually powerful member of the tunny family on his spear, when suddenly the shaft snapped under the weight of the fish ; but rather than be balked of his prize, the game fellow dived under the rocks, and after a struggle under water, lasting

over a minute, emerged triumphant, clasping the huge fish in his arms.

When the pirogues appeared to be about to sink under the weight of their dazzling freight, the order was given to re-embark, and the Marquis de C., a poor, outcast member of one of the oldest French meridional noble families, who formed one of the party, elected to return in my canoe, while our jovial German friend made his way back to the schooner in the other. All went well until we were half-way to the vessel, when our craft sprang a bad leak under the unaccustomed weight of some two hundred-weight of fish. The Marquis, though greatly alarmed because he was unable to swim, refused to move or assist me to shift the cargo.

"Do anything!" he said, in agonised tones, "but I beseech you not to throw the fish overboard. Think what a bouillabaisse¹ we shall miss if we lose it!"

Precarious as was the situation for him, I was unable to resist the unconscious humour

¹ Bouillabaisse is the famous fish stew of Marseilles. It consists of about a dozen kinds of fish and a lobster or two boiled together in saffron.

of the remark, and burst out laughing, much to the Marquis's annoyance. However, there was little time for being amused, and next moment the canoe-boys and I were swimming alongside the pirogue, creating as much noise as possible to scare away any roving sharks. By dint of tremendous exertion, we finally succeeded in depositing both the Marquis and the finny freight on board the schooner, much to the poor fellow's relief. He very quickly recovered from his unpleasant experience, however, and having selected the best fish in the hold, was soon busy preparing it for himself on the charcoal fire abaft the foremast.

Another agreeable memory is that of an excursion which I undertook into the sun-baked environment of Tuléar in quest of the masked grouse (*Pterocles personatus*), a journey which afforded me an opportunity of studying the curicus arborescent vegetation of the maritime plain and forgetting for a time the insistent claims of business.

To avoid travelling in the tiresome heat of the first hours after sunrise (the sea-breeze affords no relief until noon), my friend, a French resident of Tuléar, and I started

out at 3 a.m., each in a filanjana, or palanquin, borne by four men of the Antaimoro tribe.

These Antaimoros hail from the east coast between Farafangana and Fort Dauphin, and are the hewers of wood and drawers of water for the whole island. These helots migrate in a similar manner to the Polish and Italian workers in Central Europe, and find lucrative employment in the gold-fields near Diego Suarez, or with equal contentment, carry portly state officials in the streets of Tananarivo—the city of ten thousand roofs. The Antaimoros are a smaller and harder race of men than the other Malagasies, and can perform feats of great physical endurance with astonishing ease.

The filanjana bearers, known as borizana in the vernacular, cover the ground at a remarkable pace, moving with a peculiar swinging trot which is especially pleasant for the occupant of the chair, since scarcely any movement is perceptible, and so adroitly do the men change places that the traveller hardly notices when a relay takes place. Eight or twelve men usually accompany the filanjana on a long journey, for the purpose

of "changing team." Owing to the constant pressure of the pole, the upper part of the fleshy portion of the bearers' shoulders becomes indurated, until quite a large lump of hardened tissue is visible; but otherwise the men enjoy excellent health, and are capable of covering from forty to sixty miles in the twenty-four hours, often over rough ground, and with the thermometer sometimes as high as 180° F. in the sun.

In spite of this apparently perfectly comfortable means of progress, I found it, at least for any distance, become exceedingly tedious. Whether this was due to my temperament I cannot say; however, I never reconciled myself to this mode of conveyance, and generally preferred walking alongside my carriers, unless the sand was unusually deep, or the heat and mosquitoes exceptionally trying.

To revert to my original theme, the sand-grouse expedition, after three hours of a wearisome and difficult journey over the great sand-dunes of Tuléar, which stood out with snow-like effect in the pale moonlight streaming down with extraordinary brilliance, we emerged into a vast, free, and

perfectly flat plain, almost devoid of vegetation.

Now and then we passed a silent string of Masikoro women marching for Tuléar, in Indian file, carrying guinea-corn, beans, or manioc in raffia baskets perched on their frizzled heads. The men, assegai in hand, walked ceremoniously behind, the younger ones without any burden, the elders carrying bundles of firewood, a very necessary article on these arid plains. They salaamed to us with the graceful ease characteristic of the native, eyeing our firearms covetously the while ; and as I looked at them, I wondered how many of their kind they had murdered with gunfire before the French had deprived them of their cherished flintlocks. They all wore their lambas wound tightly round their chests, for the air was chilly, and both I and my companion were shivering with cold in our thornproof drill coats. This plain lies slightly below sea-level, and the dew falls exceptionally heavily here every night, so that were it not for the rapid evaporation during the day, the whole area would be a swamp.

Our Antaimoro borizanas pushed on with

all speed across the flat ground in order to reach the only waterhole in the district before sunrise, and the sky behind the "Table" ranges was deepening in colour from yellow to orange when at last we reached a mighty tamarind tree, which marked the site of that miserable and evil-smelling pool. In the fœtid liquid some half-dozen emaciated native cattle were standing, and from the extent of their hoof marks in the dried mud it was evident that the surrounding country formed the bed of a shallow lagoon in the wet season.

The ten dry months were almost over, and during that period not a drop of rain had fallen. Every green plant, including the cacti, such as prickly pears and Barbary figs, was withered and burnt to a sickly brown colour, the earth was baked to the hardness of asphalt, and it was almost inconceivable that a living creature could exist amid such a scene of desolation.

In the cool of the early dawn, I climbed up the wooded slopes of the high ground bordering the plain, and found a region of slender-stemmed, spiny shrubs, together with many succulent plants with a gum-like sap, which I identified as belonging to the Euphor-

biaceæ. In the valleys between the hills and the main spurs of the mountain range, the change in aspect was startling, for here were grassy glades with browsing cattle, while down below lay the brown, arid plain with never a sign of plant-life save the thorny scrub. These pleasing oases of emerald-green are caused by the filtration of water through subterranean channels in the limestone rock, and are quite European in their appearance, with the very familiar bulrushes growing thickly round the pools.

On a subsequent occasion, when I penetrated into the Mahafaly country (farther south), I failed to find any grass-like growth at all, but instead an abundance of trees with thorny spikes locally called Fantsiolitra (*Didereia*?). A peculiar characteristic of these trees was their invariable inclination towards the south, and their foliage consists of small round leaves growing among the thorns.

Besides the fantsiolitra, there is little or no vegetation save the prickly pear and the coral tree, both of which are wonderfully equipped to withstand the effects of the withering blasts that blow from the south like gusts from a blast furnace. Typically

protected is the coral tree: in default of flowers and leaves, the respiratory and other essential functions are performed by the young, succulent, spiny branches, which are covered with an armour of thin, waxy varnish. The evergreen twigs are set at right angles to the boughs, and give the tree a curious resemblance to coral, hence the native name for this peculiar shrub.

In the far south, in the Tandroy country, there is a very peculiar species of baobab with a bulbous trunk crowned with a leafy head of branches. The Tandroy folk call it Vontaka, and to them it is a very useful tree, since its swollen trunk contains a drinkable watery liquid, which can also be used for boiling purposes.

As we made our way up the burning slopes of the "Table" Mountain, on towards the pass leading to the valley of the Onihaly River, I noticed numbers of the gum-yielding euphorbia called Intisy. This peculiar specimen of the botanical world attains a height of twenty to thirty feet, and is absolutely innocent of a single vestige of leaf. The only way to describe it is to define it as a tree composed of mistletoe boughs with the

leaves and berries stripped off. If an incision is made in the trunk close to the roots, a gummy latex exudes which hardens on exposure to the air, and when worked by the natives into balls, forms a valuable rubber with the trade-name of "niggers." Unfortunately, the wasteful methods of the collectors have destroyed thousands of this plant, so that the export of the special rubber obtained therefrom has declined from nearly 500 tons per annum in the early nineties to about 50 tons at the present day.

By reason of the increasing power of the sun beating down upon the unprotected mountain-sides, we were obliged to abandon our botanical research in the coral-tree thickets of the La Table Range as early as half-past seven in the morning, and betake ourselves to the comparatively cool shade afforded by the tamarind grove near the waterpool in the plain below.

On the way thither, our carriers found a stock of wild honey in some fan-palm trees (*Hyphaene coriacea*), and burst into uproarious mirth when, after tasting some, I suggested that it should be carefully wrapped up and taken as a present to my companion's wife,

a Parisian lady. Naturally, the honey would have melted away on the journey, of which fact the carriers were perfectly aware, hence probably their mirth ; but among natives a white man never knows when he is going to perpetrate the *bon mot* of his life. The opaque and sturdy leaves of the fan-palm form an efficient shelter for bees, and are, moreover, put to a variety of uses by the Sakalava. The women weave from the fibres and leafy parts a material which serves as a partition in their huts.

On our arrival at the water-hole, the Antaimoros scraped away the earth near the margin until they had formed a basin some six inches deep, into which some more or less drinkable water soon filtered. This they imbibed by means of bamboo tubes cut from the neighbouring reeds. All at once, as we rested in the shade of the tamarind, we heard the hat-a-catacat of the sand-grouse in the still morning air, and looking up, saw several score winging their way across the plain towards us, with the intention of visiting the only water-hole for many miles around.

The Sakalava term this bird “ hatakaty,”

from its peculiar cry, and a very handsome creature it is. Its feet, colouring, and plumage resemble the British grouse more than those of any other species of sand-grouse I have seen (although they belong to a totally different family). Yet there is a distinct leaning towards the partridge family in the bird's shape and size, as its scientific name (*Pterocles personatus*) implies. There is a conspicuously broad band of black below the eyes on either side of the head; otherwise, the general trend of colouring inclines towards a sandy yellow. The male is slightly smaller than the female, and has brighter markings, especially about the head.

As the flock came directly above us, some seventy feet high, I brought down five birds with a right and left of No. 6 shot with surprising ease, and it was more agreeable still to find the birds stone-dead upon the ground. The flight continued for nearly three-quarters of an hour, during which period we bagged forty-two birds, re-loading as fast as we could until our gun-barrels became too hot to hold with comfort. My friend was overjoyed at the result, for his vocation permitted him few opportunities

of obtaining such a welcome variation as wildfowl from his daily ration of Menabé rice and unpalatable ox-flesh. We could have added many more victims to our list, but I insisted upon the thirsty survivors being allowed to drink their fill of the green liquid at our feet and depart for their mountain homes without further molestation.

The sharp cackle of the returning coveys had barely died away into the strange silence of the desert, when a species of purple pigeon (*Funingus madagascariensis*) began to arrive, and these birds, in common with their fellows, the pretty swallow-shaped painted doves (*Turtur picturatus*), apparently harboured no distrust of man whatsoever, unless, perhaps, their mad craving for water had deadened their instincts of self-preservation to such an extent as to render them reckless of the possible danger to be expected of human presence. I believe several specimens of *Turtur australis* were among the drinking pigeons, for there were some birds lighter-hued and smaller than the rest.

Our Antaimoro carriers could not understand why we refused to shoot everything that approached the water-hole, and their

attitude towards the subject seemed to me to throw a vivid light on one of the causes of the extermination of such birds as the æpyornis by primitive man—namely, his innate love of killing for killing's sake. The doves, they assured us, were delicious eating, and it was a source of dumb amazement to them that the Vazahas absolutely declined to annihilate a flock of several hundred green parakeets.

My French friend lent his collector's gun to my head boy, Lahipasy, who, having served in the tirailleurs, claimed a working knowledge of firearms. (Since 1895 no Malagasy is permitted to use or possess a gun in civil life.) Instead of yielding to his comrades' advice to blaze away at the pretty little parakeets (*Agapornis madagascariensis*), my servant, with superior wisdom written all over his black features, strode off into the glare, and finally disappeared in the bush.

After about an hour's hunt, he returned, triumphantly carrying several grey and white lemurs (*L. griseus*) by their lengthy tails. Then there went up a yell of great glee from the lusty throats of two score filanjana men,

who raced back into the palm scrub for firewood. Within a quarter of an hour, nothing remained of the lemurs but their striped tails, which I keep as a memento of the quickest roasting feat I have ever witnessed.

The east-coast men spitted the makis (lemurs) as the French do woodcock, except that they used palmetto leaves instead of toast to catch the dripping entrails. The animals, by the way, were not skinned, but roasted whole, fur and all; and such an enjoyable lunch did the natives make of them that Lahipasy simply began to swell with the knowledge of his importance as a public benefactor.

The date of our little expedition was December 20, upon the noon of which day the sun stood at its zenith over the plain of Tuléar, and the two Europeans who participated in the return journey from the water-hole are not likely to forget their experiences for many a long year. The sand-laden southerly breeze died away, and the wind suddenly veered to the north-east, with a marked increase in temperature and a most exhausting humidity.

The heat was grilling and the path devoid of all shade, while, to make matters worse, a blinding glare rose from the white salt-encrusted earth. I endeavoured to walk at first, but the sand soon became too soft to render this method of progression comfortable, so I then attempted riding in the filanjana chair. To this mode of travelling, however, I had never become accustomed, and the curious swinging motion made the perspiration literally pour off me, so that I was obliged to climb out again and order the bearers to slacken their pace and follow me in single file. Thus we eventually reached our bungalows in the full glare of the noontide heat, and I took five grains of quinine as a precautionary measure, which was well-timed treatment, for I spent the rest of the day fighting against a troublesome attack of fever.

On our return to the settlement, my little brown Antaimoros seemed to be very much aggrieved at something or other, and on my asking them what was the matter, they gave me to understand that I had paid them a very poor compliment in declining to be carried in a filanjana during the morning,

and declared that they had not expected such treatment from the Vazaha-bé Cabaro (big bean stranger. The natives invariably give characteristic nicknames to Europeans and Creoles who come amongst them, and I was not spared, seeing that I evinced such an interest in their bean crops). I explained to them, in my halting Sakalava dialect, that, notwithstanding my dislike of being carried in a filanjana, they should all get their customary present of *petits sous*, an announcement which at once put a different complexion on the matter, and sent them away rejoicing.

That evening, I saw the same fellows joyfully carrying a huge horse-mackerel (the tarpon of the Mozambique Channel) on their shoulders back to their quarters among the filayou trees, in a hollow between the sand-dunes, all singing lustily in their east-coast tongue, of which, unfortunately, I could not understand a word, for these tribes are peculiarly rich in interesting folk-lore. They made a festive night of it, as far as I could gather, and little of the tarpon survived the repast. Nature has taught these children of the desert to make the most of the good

things of life when they can be obtained, for periods of prolonged drought are inevitable, and then they endure great suffering, being sometimes reduced to a diet of tamarind kernels ground with charcoal.



A MASIKORO,
With a month's provisions.

CHAPTER V

THE SAKALAVA

IT is universally admitted that we must look for the origin of the first inhabitants of Madagascar in the same direction as we seek that of the Papuan races of New Guinea. The close resemblance between the Melanesian negroids, or negritos, and the bulk of the Malagasy population is striking, and we have, in addition, the testimony of the similarity of language. It is manifest that the Malagasy language emanated from the original source of that of the Indo-Polynesian islanders, that is to say, the source whence came Maori, Malay, Fijian, and possibly Papuan.

Some of the most competent French authorities, such as Grandidier and Gautier, have come to the conclusion that the aboriginal Malagasy native never existed, and their opinion is doubtless correct, for although

animals in a fossil state have been recovered in many parts of the island, no remains of prehistoric man have yet been found, and all discoveries of the traces of human occupation point to a comparatively recent epoch.

The Antimerina, which is the correct name of the Hovas (though they call themselves Hovas), inhabit the high central tableland and are supposed, by the latest authorities, to be of fairly pure Malay blood, descendants of immigrants who moved into the healthy highlands owing to their inability to withstand the malaria prevalent along the coast. Their language belongs to a very early branch of the Malay family, and though it contains a number of Bantu words, these were probably incorporated from the speech of their slaves. They, like the Betsileos, are more civilised than the remaining tribes of the island, and this advance is probably due to the climatic conditions under which they exist. These conditions differ from those of the rest of Madagascar in a marked degree, so much so that it is difficult to realise the tropical latitude of the Imerina plateau.

The Sakalava race, distinctly of Malay



THE EAST AFRICAN WAZIRI, FROM WHOM THE VAZAMBA PEOPLE OF MADAGASCAR ARE SUPPOSED
TO BE DESCENDED.

descent, emanated from the region of Saka on the south-east coast, and moving northwards and westwards, conquered the entire western half of the island, a detached band finding its way into the south-western corner and founding there the Mahafaly Kingdom. Both the folklore and traditions of the Sakalava and Mahafaly races show a disposition to attribute their noble caste to a white-skinned ancestry; but whether these traditions have their source in an Arab immigration in the remote past, or in the accidental arrival of shipwrecked Europeans in their midst, who can say?

With reference to this curious tradition, I may mention that one day, when in search of guinea-fowl near the pass of "La Table," on the border of the Mahafaly country, I met some natives coming from south of the Onihaly River, carrying beans to Tuléar market. My boy—Lahipasy, a Mahafaly—hailed them at my request, because I was anxious to see Mahafaly people at close quarters. The chief of the caravan, whose name was Andrianosy, had a walnut-brown skin, curly (not woolly) hair, and, strangest feature of all, eyes of sky blue. Had he

been white, I could have sworn he was a Britisher, and curiously enough, he wore a George III. spade guinea with a coral amulet on his sinewy chest. He boasted to my boy of his white ancestry—although his birthplace was Androka, a remote coastal village in the south, just outside the tropics, where a white man is extremely rarely seen.

At all events, the Sakalava founded the great Masikoro Kingdom, under their Maro-Serang Lahifotsy, or white man King, who also established his rule over the Kingdom of Menabé. The Vazimba were driven forth and, unfortunately, eventually died out. Had they survived, their folklore might have shed some light on the probable early connections between Africa and Madagascar, unless it is a mere coincidence that in the hinterland of East Africa, in the latitude of Zanzibar, a native tribe called the “Wa-Zimba” exists at the present day.

The former slave-traffic has left its mark upon the coastal portion of the Sakalava people, and to-day Makoa villages are to be seen where the prolific negro, descendant of the old slave, thrives as vigorously as he does in exile in other parts of the world.



SAKALAVA WOMAN.

Menabé Province.

The Sakalava themselves, in spite of the vast extent of their territory, do not number more than 200,000, and are rapidly dying out. In connection with this statement, let me say that the policy of the French Government towards this warlike and independent race seems to be one of extermination. The Sakalava, being a born warrior, is intensely proud and will not work for the European for payment, for he feels that menial labour is beneath his dignity ; though, as a friend of mine who has lived all his life among them tersely put it, “ they will work for a European just to oblige.” Consequently, they are a troublesome people to deal with from a ruling race’s point of view.

The problem, however, is solving itself in a most tragic way. Quite recently the Government has put an embargo on the immigration of the Antaimoros (who are very willing workers) into the Sakalava country, and the Sakalava, fearing that this regulation will ultimately result in their offspring becoming “ slaves ” of the white man, *are killing all their new-born children.* Deplorable as this state of affairs may seem, it is nevertheless true. The poll-tax is also

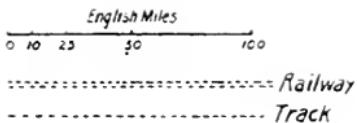
a very lively thorn in the side of the Masikoro, who says that he sees no reason why a man should be taxed for having a head upon his shoulders, and I have often heard them declare that they would not object to paying the tax at all if it was a fine for being beaten by the French in the war.

The various customs of the Sakalava and Mahafaly people in connection with marriage, religion, and burial broadly resemble those of other primitive races, and as they are interesting from a comparative point of view, I shall now describe their most salient features.

The marriage ceremonies of both the inland and coastal (Masikoro and Vezo) Sakalava are somewhat lacking in picturesque detail; the only necessary qualifications appeared to me to be the present of a fat ox, or oxen, from the bridegroom to the bride's parents, and a supply of several demijohns of red wine for the ceremony by the parents of both contracting parties. The nuptial ties are equally easily dissolved, for if his wife does not suit him, the young man simply returns her to her parents and chooses another, or *vice versa*, if the lady is

THE SAKAWA CHIEF AT CASAMANGAÉ, WHOSE CABINET I REFUSED TO UNDERSTAND.





48°

50°

Copyright.



disappointed in her married life. A childless union is considered a great disgrace to both parties, and the unhappy couple invariably separate and find fresh mates.

Sakalava children, by the way, are weaned as early as two days old, when they are fed on rice or pounded maize, a diet which creates an undue distension of their stomachs. The mother carries the baby strapped to her back in the folds of her lamba for a while ; but as soon as the mite can crawl he is left to shift for himself, and may be seen during the day disporting his naked little copper-coloured body along the sandy paths round the village.

At the age of eight or nine, the youngster is already as far advanced as a child of the temperate zone at sixteen years of age, and the Vezos' children are especially forward and intelligent. The girls generally grow up into attractive and industrious women, but the boys show a tendency to become morose, lazy, and arrogant as soon as they attain the age of puberty. The children are common property and always find some one to care for them.

Among the poorer classes, the newly

married couple often go and live with the parents of one of the parties, all together in one little hut (a practice which does not improve their morals from a European point of view), and as long as they observe the law of fady (faly in Sakalava), which does not permit of a man living with his wife and her sister at the same time or of marrying his immediate next-of-kin, they seem to do exactly as they please. A chief is allowed as many wives as he can afford to maintain, but seldom has more than four, a number which is affected by many well-to-do Creoles on the coast.

The descendants of the royal families in the ancient Fiherenga (or Fiheranana as we now call it) Kingdom, in common with high-caste natives in most parts of the island, gladly give their daughters in "mariage malgache" (that is, a union according to their customs) to a European, especially if he is of good local standing.

In connection with this institution, I remember once receiving a visit from an old Sakalava chief, hailing from the village of Casamangabé in the Mangoky Valley. I was sitting in my tent on the river-bank at the



MASIKORO GIRL POUNDING GUINEA-CORN.
Fihiranana Valley.

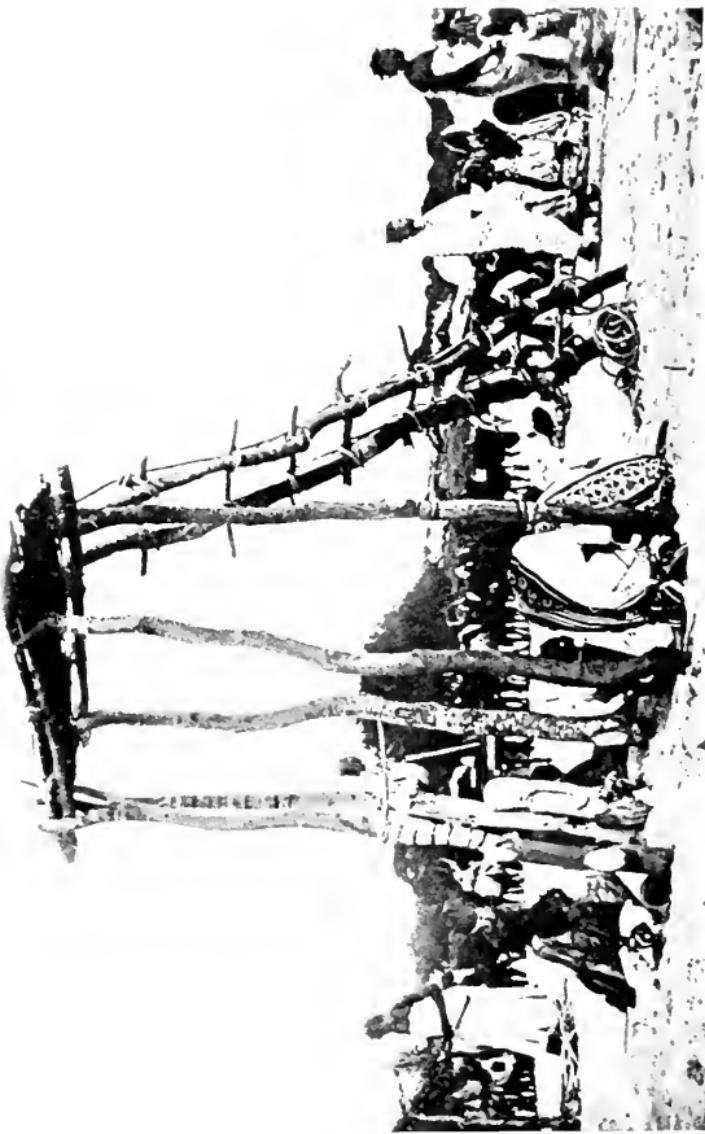
time, directing the skinning of several large crocodiles, when he, his two daughters and attendants, arrived, and without further ado marched in, carrying their spears to my very threshold. On my remonstrating with him, he boldly demanded a present of salt and matches, and quite unabashed added an aside in Masikoro dialect : “Don’t consider my daughters—they are not beautiful, for one has faulty teeth and the other is round-shouldered; but if you are looking for a really handsome girl, there is my niece at Marolafy across the water. Her father, who is a bigger chief than I, will gladly give her to you if you will write out a taratasy (note) for me.”

The actual meaning of this little speech was not clear to me at first, for my Makoa canoeman interpreted it wrongly; but it eventually transpired that the astute fellow desired me to assign to him a portion of his brother’s usual nuptial gift, should I decide to marry the latter’s daughter. Needless to mention, I was not in search of a Sakalava bride, so I pretended not to grasp the purport of his cabary (palaver), and the fellow went away, doubtless thinking the mind

of the white man in general an insoluble mystery.

When married to a white man, the native woman's conduct is generally irreproachable, probably due to an intimate knowledge of the white man's views on the marital relations; but when the wife of a native, she is always willing to encourage an intimacy with a European. Nor is this intimacy always unknown to her husband, who is a born *souteneur*, and always takes doles and bribes when such are forthcoming. A native wife, curiously enough, will never sit at meals with her white husband, even after years of cohabitation, but takes the food he gives her and goes away and eats it, generally out of his sight.

Whilst upon this subject, it seems to me a vital question as to what bearing upon the future of the colony the enormous numbers of offspring from these mixed unions will have. With the exception of Tananarivo, Diego Suarez, Tamatave, and Majunga, there are few places in the whole island where a white woman can exist, I hesitate to say live, so that I hardly need dwell on the frequency of



THE BILO PLATFORM, TULÉAR.

On this platform the patient, who is supposed to be possessed by an evil spirit, has to drink some of the blood of the bull sacrificed for his welfare.

unions between white settlers and native women.

Very frequently the half-caste child, if a girl, leans, like her mother, towards the company of the Vazaha; if a boy, he is lazier than the native, full of hatred against the black element, and atrociously arrogant, generally a perfectly useless and inferior creature, possessing all the vices of both races and none of the virtues of either. With the labour question of such importance in this island, it would seem that pure natives and pure whites are infinitely to be preferred, if the colony is ever to rise to a really desirable possession.

In the event of a grave sickness, a "bilo" is held. The patient, whose face has been rendered hideous by smearing it with white manioc powder, is carried up to a platform of intertwined rushes raised above the earth upon bamboo trestles. A rope with a running noose is then slipped round a fat ox's neck, and the beast is dexterously drawn up to the stage by heaving the rope over a convenient tamarind bough. Then the animal is stunned by a blow from a club, and while it still breathes, the "ombiasy," or sorcerer,

dispatches the poor beast by the barbarous method of cutting out its heart. Draining off the outpouring blood in gourds, the sorcerer raises them on long poles above the patient, and after an incantation pours the still warm liquid over him. During this ceremony, the male spectators create a terrific din by beating tom-toms, while the women clap their hands and sing dismal dirges unceasingly.

Meanwhile, the ox is being cut up and roasted, hide, horns and all, so that a sacrifice of chosen meats, generally the entrails, may be offered upon the platform or altar to the spirit presiding over the destiny of the sick person. A drinking bout of the wildest description follows these proceedings, and in it the patient is expected to join. He is also encouraged to participate in the subsequent dancing, a recreation which does not strike the onlooker as a particularly good "cure" for the invalid. If the sufferer is too ill to join in the performance, one of his relatives acts as proxy.

On these occasions, the whole village, bedecked in its best finery, turns out, and if any one belonging to your native staff hap-



THE BILO CEREMONY, MENABÉ : SAKALAVA TRIBE.

The Bilo ceremony is a method of curing a man of certain diseases, and comprises a thanksgiving feast in the event of its success.

pens to be engaged on a tedious task, such as ironing your drill suits, so much the worse for you. The girls become so excited on hearing the distant tom-toms and other sounds of revelry, which waft across the compounds, that they throw everything down and run to the native village as fast as their legs will carry them. On one occasion, I lost a jacket and three shirts in this manner, the thoughtless girl leaving them near the charcoal brazier on which her irons were heating. The sea-breeze caught the linen articles and blew them across the glowing embers, where they were soon burned to pieces. All work is suspended on the day of a "bilo," for the participants become so intoxicated that, instead of resuming duties, they are obliged to lie about the village and sleep off the effects of the carousal.

A Sakalava funeral procession furnishes one of the most grotesque sights imaginable. Four sable heathen carry the corpse round the village, the body being enclosed in a soft wood coffin of the roughest description, from which it is not uncommon to see either the head or feet protruding. The Malagasies show a great veneration towards their dead,

and the name of a dead person of rank is never mentioned again, but a posthumous name is assigned to him or her as the case may be. In the olden days it was a crime to speak of a defunct king by his original title, for everything connected with a dead or dying sovereign became "fady," or unclean.

The burial rites are simple, although the Malagasies make a point of fetching the bodies of their relatives from great distances, in order to inter them in the family tomb among the stone-heaps. During the actual ceremony, if it may be so styled, the sorrowing relatives maintain a dismal tattoo on their tom-toms, and immediately afterwards, a wild orgy is indulged in, large quantities of liquor (which has been begged, borrowed, or stolen by the family) being consumed. The deceased's valuables, especially his gold and silver, the amount of which varies greatly according to his rank, are interred with him, and no native would ever dream of desecrating a grave for the wealth contained therein.

Near St. Augustin, which lies at the mouth of the Onihaly River, there are subterranean grottoes in the limestone hills which have served as a burial-ground for generations of



SAKALAVA GIRL MOURNING FOR THE DEAD.

Mahafaly kings; but Malagasy cemeteries should be visited with caution by white men, for the native is inclined to look upon such a visit as an intrusion. In the days before the French occupation, a European once attempted to loot the gold buried with these royal personages, but being caught in the act of committing the offence, was promptly transfixed by half a dozen broad-bladed assegais to the wooden burial-posts.

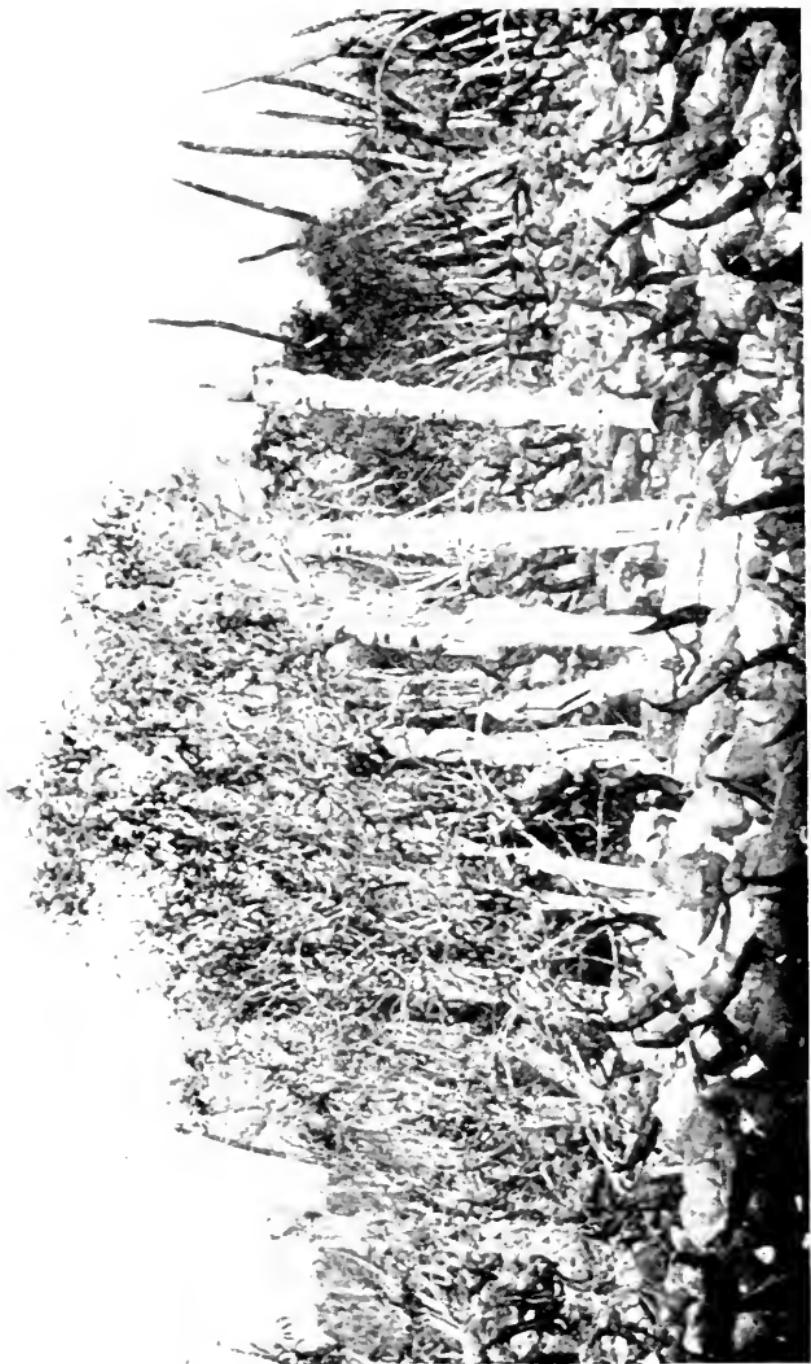
Both the Sakalava and Mahafaly erect heaps of stones over the graves of the dead, and the latter tribe construct a formidable barrier of piled-up ox-horns round the last resting-place of the defunct. These walls of horns are several feet high and quite impassable, except in one place, which is guarded by cowherds during the day and by fires during the night. In the centre, stand pillars of strangely carved mahogany about fifteen feet high, which reminded me vividly of a similar custom among the Patagonian Tehuelches. How strangely alike all primitive people are!

Upon the death of a king or chief, sometimes a thousand cattle are slain as an offering to propitiate the spirit of the departed, the

flesh being distributed among many villages and sometimes devoured almost raw. If the oxen are roasted, they are generally roasted whole, hides, hair and all, and after the feast not even the entrails remain, for they are not previously removed from the carcases. Of late years, however, the commercial value of such articles as hides and horns has been recognised by the Sakalava, and, except in the remoter districts, these portions are now kept for barter.

With regard to religion, beyond a kind of fetish-worship practised in the inland districts, the Sakalava possess none of their own. They accept Lutheran doctrines with alacrity, and attend divine services on Sundays and Christmas Day in the little wooden Norwegian chapels; but should a Roman Catholic priest point to an advantage in adopting the religion of Rome, they will readily become his converts. As the result of a fancied grievance, however, they will promptly revert to Protestantism; and they usually relapse into their original heathen state in the end. Their conversion to Christianity is in most cases due to the fact that missionaries provide free medical relief. Against this gratuitous

A CHIEF'S TOMB
In Sakalava Burial-ground, Manja District. Note the hedge of oxen-horns (sacrificed), the carved posts, effigies, and the peculiar tall cacti planted as a hedge.



medical work, the French staff-surgeons, who expect payment for their attendance, have protested to the Government, and as a result several mission establishments have had to be abandoned.

Nearly all natives wear "auly" or charms, consisting of beads and crocodile teeth, and a species of astrological divination, called Sikidy-Vintana, has been handed down from remote ages. In connection with this last-mentioned superstition, the following incident is perhaps worth recording.

One day, at Ambohibé, I had an important dispatch for the German East African liner, lying at anchor six miles out at sea. The wind was fresh and the bar looked bad, but it was imperative to reach the vessel, which was due to sail at sundown. I found it impossible, even after tempting offers of remuneration, to induce a single canoe-man to put to sea, so in despair I sought the assistance of a French colonist of some twelve years' residence on the coast. On hearing my tale of woe, he simply smiled enigmatically and accompanied me to the foreshore. Assembling the canoe-owners, he produced a handful of beans from his pocket, and

proceeded to lay them out in what looked like a series of geometrical figures on the sandy beach.

On the completion of this curious game, I suddenly found myself surrounded by a dozen yelling Vezos, each begging me to take his boat. Dumbfounded at the swift turn of events, I turned helplessly to my French friend, who merely remarked that as the augury was propitious, I could now choose a canoe at my convenience, and, needless to say, I reached the steamer safely. He would not, however, explain the sikidy, and the only interpretation of the word I could obtain was the "Bible of our forefathers"—this from a Roman Catholic father at Manombé.

Fady (or taboo) is an institution common throughout the island. Fady, for example, is the child born upon the days of Tuesday or Friday, and he or she is placed in the bush for two days and nights in order that the evil spirits may depart. Naturally, a great number of these poor infants perish miserably, often falling a welcome prey to ants or land-crabs, and only the very strongest survive the cruel ordeal. The Mahafaly regard the fat-tailed smooth-haired sheep as



A MAHAFALY DANCE—ANAKAO.

fady, and refuse to touch their flesh, but, strange to say, the pig of scavenging propensities is devoured with avidity. It is a welcome fact that gold is fady in many parts of the west coast, and in these regions theft is rare; but the eastern Antaimoros are not burdened with this superstition, and will attack and rob a white man when a propitious occasion presents itself.

Since the conquest of the island by the French, the "ombiasy," or sorcerer, has lost much of his hold upon the natives, but in the outlying villages he is still consulted in cases of sickness or distress.

Generally speaking, the good points in the Sakalava character are bravery, capability of enduring pain and fatigue, comparative honesty, devotion to children, and veneration of old age. In addition, they are extremely sociable and loathe separation from their relations, with whom they are generally on good terms. The women-folk are very industrious, graceful in their carriage, and of extremely cheerful disposition.

The Sakalava make good soldiers, for they are courageous to a degree, and the calling of arms seems to be one for which they are

peculiarly adapted on account of their proud and warlike disposition. When they were at the zenith of their power, their menial work was performed by Makoa negro slaves from the neighbouring African coast, and they have never forgotten that glorious epoch. Physically, they are splendid specimens of humanity, and, save for fever, enjoy general good health, though it is a regrettable fact that great havoc has been wrought by certain diseases emanating from the first military occupation in the north of the island.

As evidence of the courageous spirit of this people, let me describe a sport in which the Sakalava sometimes indulge, and one which I believe is peculiar to the island. A native will boast to his comrades that he will fetch a bull out of a herd of five or six hundred cattle, and leaving his fellows as spectators, will force his way into the centre of the herd and seize the particular animal. Flinging his right arm round its hump and catching hold of its muzzle with his left hand, the sportsman now endeavours to detach the animal from the herd. A fierce struggle naturally ensues, for the beast refuses to

WOMEN PORTERS.



quit his fellow-kine, and begins to butt furiously and swerve madly in all directions, the native meanwhile hanging on with might and main.

Should the remainder of the herd take alarm at the unusual commotion in their midst, a wild stampede will ensue, and to avoid being trampled requires the utmost agility, skill, and nerve on the part of the "bull fighter." Usually, in such a case, the game fellow is shockingly trampled ; but this catastrophe is merely a signal for the next brave man to step out and try his fortune. I have seen as many as a dozen men injured (some fatally) before the desired result was achieved and the game declared to be at an end. For sheer pluck, I think this Sakalava pastime will compare favourably with any sport in which the white man indulges.

The following incident will show very clearly the Sakalava indifference to pain. One morning, my boys came and begged me to lend them my rifle. Taking it for granted that they wished to try their skill on some wildfowl, I lent them my shot-gun with some cartridges containing No. 4 shot,

and a little while afterwards heard, quite near the camp, intermittent reports followed by shrieks of laughter. Wondering what was causing all the mirth, I strolled over in the direction of the gun-fire, and the reader can judge of my astonishment when I discovered that they were taking pot-shots at one another from a distance of about a hundred yards! The moment for laughter occurred when the target came back to the group and had the numerous pellets that had penetrated his skin picked out by his delighted companions! Subsequent to this occasion they often used to beg me to lend them the shot-gun, offering to give up a month's pay if only I would relent; but, needless to say, I felt that the amusement was much too risky a one to be indulged in a second time.

The natives of the west coast are skilful workers in metal, and produce an infinite variety of finely tempered spear-heads, iron being easily obtained, chiefly from alluvial deposits in the mountains. In the villages of the south-west a wooden forge with bellows is frequently seen.

The Malagasy is very expert in the use



SAKALAVA HUTS IN THE MAKING.
Tsiribohina Valley.

of the assegai, and throws them at a great distance with wonderful accuracy. Once, near Befandriana, I saw a wild boar hurrying past the outskirts of the village at dusk, when a headman caught sight of it, and promptly hurling his spear, transfixed the animal.

Upon entering a "poste," or garrisoned village, the natives are obliged to go unarmed, so they detach their spear-heads and secrete them in their lambas, carrying the shafts as sticks. The butt end, however, has a metal attachment (like the blade of a small axe), which is occasionally used as a hoe.

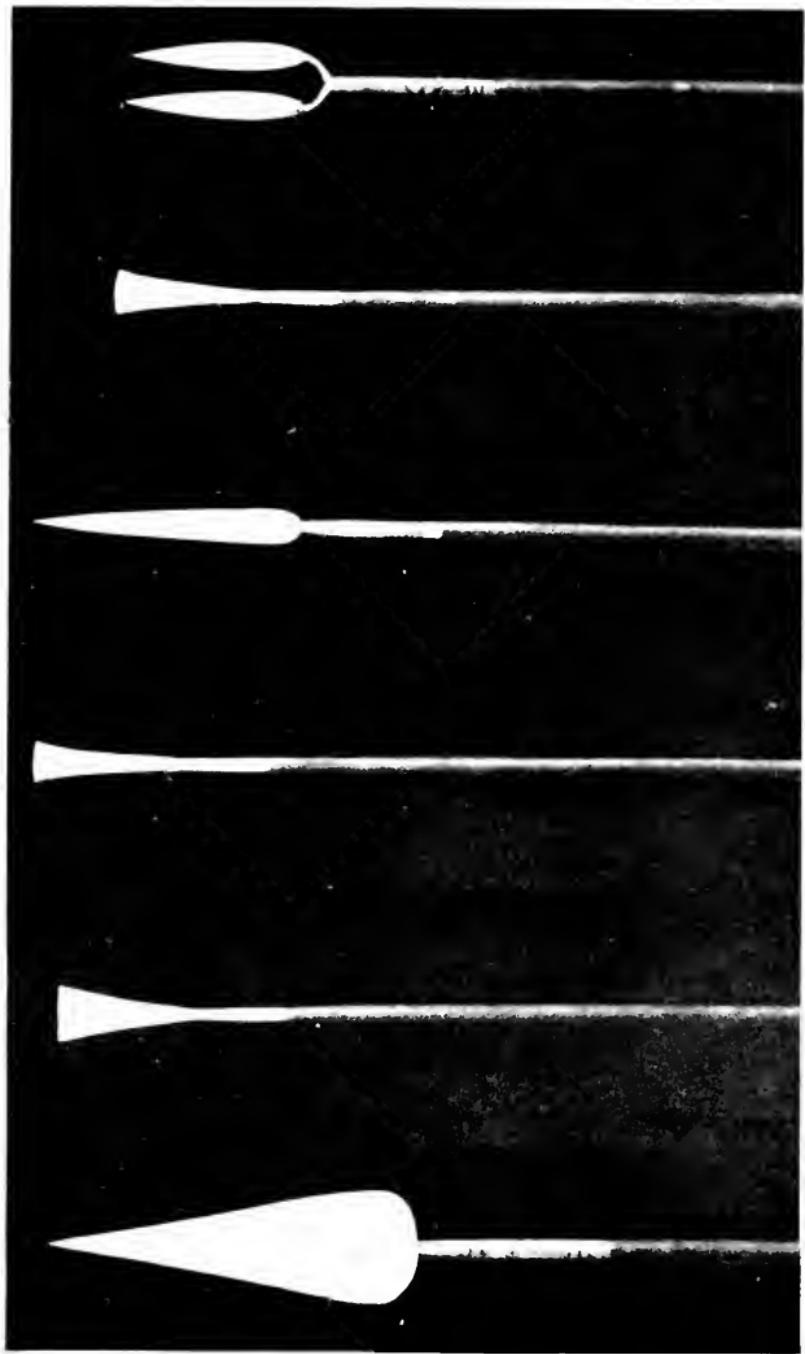
The universal dress, for both sexes, is the lamba, a single sheet of cloth which the native fastens about him with great dexterity. This costume is extremely simple and becoming, and since brightly dyed European cotton cloth has ousted the native-dyed blue material, the scene at a gathering of the village or in the market-place is exceptionally gay.

All is well until the Fête Nationale on July 14 of every year, a date on which the Malagasies flock from miles around to the nearest white settlement, wearing the most

grotesque costumes. On this auspicious occasion the *lamba* is discarded, and I have seen a stalwart young chief, who would appear eminently handsome in his own garb, looking a despicable buffoon in the blue uniform of a Parisian bank messenger, complete with the usual brass plate, while his wives, having donned cast-off French dresses and millinery, presented anything but a comely appearance. The only inhabitants of Madagascar who can wear European clothes to advantage are the Hovas, but even with them, boots seem to strike a jarring note.

The Sakalava, like most primitive people, do not show much talent for music, though the same cannot be said of the Hovas, who play their curiously shaped stringed instrument of bamboo called "valiha" with great skill, the resulting music being quite agreeable to European ears.

The Vezos, who inhabit the Menabé coast, are, as I have stated before, expert fishermen, and a welcome trait in their characters is their love of personal cleanliness. While the Vezo would be perfectly miserable if unable to indulge in his daily ablutions, the Masikoro



ROYAL SPAR, THIRTEEN KING

SAKATAWA WAR SPIR

SAKATAWA, FISH SPIR

displays a decided distaste for water, and will not enter that element unless he is absolutely obliged to, such as in fording a river.

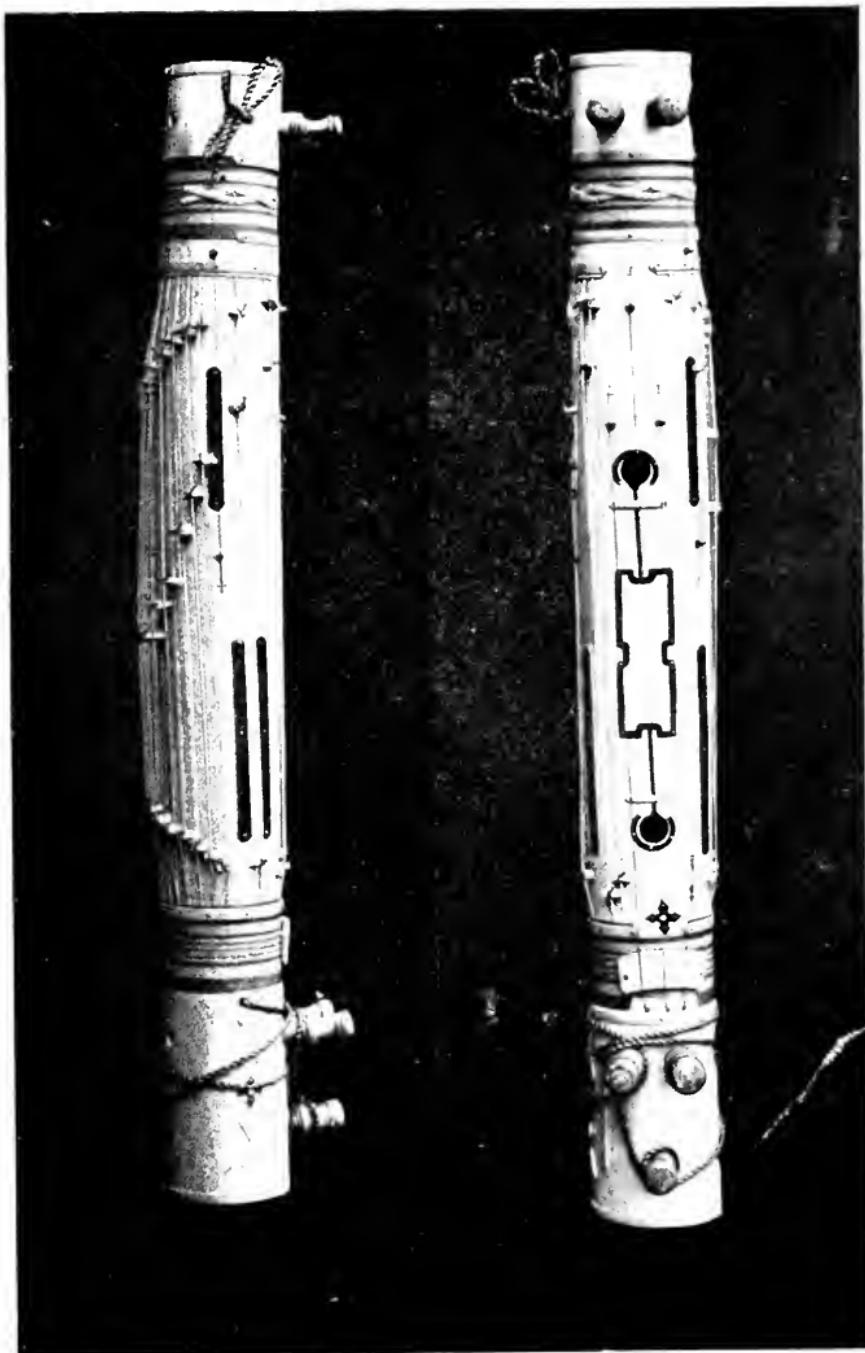
The Vezo, however, is extremely lazy, and is not easily persuaded to go out and fish for profit; doubtless, he feels that he has bestirred himself sufficiently when he has satisfied his own personal needs and those of his family. These dark-skinned long-shoremen have so few wants that, until the arrival of the Levantine traders with their liquor, hardly a decade ago, they would not take their canoes up the rivers to bring down the bean crops to the coast. Even now, only very substantial remuneration will tempt them to paddle through the mangrove creeks to where the Masikoro fills the gunny sacks with beans at the river's edge.

My Vezo boys, however, loved anything in the nature of an expedition, and were never so happy as when I made excursions into the bush country. They seemed very willing to assist me in my botanical and natural history researches, and would scour the scrub for specimens for miles around, seemingly indifferent to the unbearable heat

and blinding glare of the sun. Like most seafaring people, they are extremely good-tempered and very easily amused, and their pleasing, walnut-hued faces seem to be constantly smiling.

It is astonishing on what simple fare all these natives exist ; they will flourish on a few yams, bananas, and manioc, all of which are available almost throughout the year and require no great expenditure of labour to cultivate. In bad seasons, when the rivers fail to rise and agriculture is impossible, owing to the drought, there are herds of oxen and goats (which the Masikoro drives with him on his migrations up and down the country) to fall back on. Consequently, the necessity for hard work is not apparent to the Sakalava, and labour is neither cheap nor abundant. For plantations to prove successful, a reasonable and indentured *main d'œuvre* is absolutely essential, and as the Government has vetoed the importation of East Indian coolies, there is little prospect at present of any great agricultural development of Western Madagascar.

Strange to relate, it is only since the Masikoros have acquired a taste for French



MALAGASY "VALIHA,"
Musical instrument of the Antimerina or Hovas.

red wine that there has been any increase in the cultivation of butter-beans, for by the sale of this produce they can easily obtain the money necessary to indulge in the new-found luxury.

I will conclude this chapter on the Sakalava by a brief mention of my boy, a Mahafaly native, called Lahipasy. I engaged him on the recommendation of the Marquis de C. (with whom the reader is already acquainted), and never once did I regret doing so. He proved himself an excellent servant, being absolutely honest, but, no doubt proud of his position as a trusted retainer of the white man, displayed the utmost contempt for his fellows. After all, this attitude is distinctly human, and applies in some degree to far more intelligent races, being simply an instance of that "brief authority" we all know so well, but seldom waste time in analysing.

Only on one occasion did Lahipasy feel that I had hurt his dignity, and that was when we were fighting against the rising waters of the Mangoky. As time was of prime importance, I bade him join his fellows in performing the labour of carrying the

sacks of beans from the plantation down to the canoes, and it was a long time before poor Lahipasy recovered from the sense of humiliation inflicted by this command.

He was always very eager to assist me in the supervision of the workers, and never failed to seize the opportunity of bringing a delinquent before me, on which occasions he bristled with righteousness to such an extent, that I had great difficulty in assuming a serious appearance before the culprit. He seemed to guess my wants instinctively, and whenever we pitched camp near a Government post, he would lay out my white linen suits with their shining buttons in spotless array, though how he managed to transport and keep them so well cleaned in the wildest places, I never discovered. He was, moreover, particularly careful about his own personal appearance, and always produced a clean jacket from somewhere to wear over his loin-cloth as soon as we reached inhabited places.

On my once asking him what use he made of his wages, he replied that he bought straw hats from the Greek traders on the coast, and offered to show me his purchases.

PAHUPASY, MIN. MAHAPATRY BOY.



A VÉZO CHILD.



I was very much amused when he produced several white plaited Homburgs with black silk bands, which must have cost him at least six silver dollars apiece. "Why do you buy these straw hats?" I asked, my curiosity somewhat roused. "Vazaha," he answered, "I must look smart at Chreesmasy." As I did not immediately grasp his meaning, he explained to me that this was the great annual festival in the coast towns, whither all good Malagasies betook themselves to join in the merry-making; and it at last dawned on me that he was referring to Christmas Day, which is celebrated in a manner similar to that in which the Fête Nationale is upheld.

The Sakalava temperament, however, is much more independent than that of the Mahafaly, as the following incident will clearly show. On one occasion, as we were travelling through the bush country of the interior, one of my carriers, in spite of my repeated admonitions, continually lagged behind, and at length so delayed our progress that I was obliged to send Lahipasy to bring him up. On his arrival, I told him that I had decided to fine him 50 centimes for his laziness, feeling quite certain that this punish-

ment would obviate any further trouble with the man. Judge of my discomfiture, when the borizana drew the silver piece from the folds of his lamba and, handing it to me with a disdainful mien, laid his burden at my feet and proudly walked away. To replace him was impossible, for we were many miles from the nearest village, but I was obliged to let him go, and we had to resume the journey as best we could.

CHAPTER VI

SOME COLONIAL CHARACTERS

EUROPEANS do not, to put it in a well-worn phrase, come out to Madagascar for their health's sake, so that beyond members of the Foreign Legion, civil administrators, and purely business men, the remaining white colonists are few in number. With regard to the last mentioned, one naturally concludes that some unusual conjuncture of circumstances has driven them on these benighted shores, and the surmise is more often than not correct. From the point of view of the student of human character, however, they are distinctly interesting, more interesting perhaps than their successful and orthodox brothers.

In the bush, all men know one another, and on my journeys in Madagascar, I have had occasion to be friendly with some strange

specimens of the genus homo, ranging from a man who was hiding from the law for robbery with violence, or for the misuse of public money, to the weak-kneed, good-natured aristocrat who found that unbounded generosity was not a virtue suitable to the stress of modern existence. And after all is said and done, I must admit that the scoundrel, if he chooses, can at times be quite a pleasant fellow! Perhaps it would be wise to add, a pleasant fellow in the bush; and this seems to accord with the scientific argument that crime is simple atavism, for here we have the primitive man come back to his own world.

Many of these derelicts have Betsimisaraka wives, and when their ignoble lords sail down in the wet season to drink away the money earned during the bean harvest, these Malagasy women manage their husbands' affairs with a skill that was a revelation to me. What is more, they always contrive to save a considerable amount of money against the day when their roving mates return, usually investing it, with their relations, in herds of cattle across the mountains. Subsequently, we have the pitiable spectacle of the white

man quite content to subsist on the charity of his black parents-in-law !

I came across one specimen, formerly a captain in the Swiss artillery, who would collect armed bands of Masikoros and organise raids upon the harmless and peaceful villagers for miles around, torturing them and impounding them at his will. He was much hurt when I refused to join forces with him, and even offered me his sister-in-law (a Sakalava girl) as wife, in order to induce me to stay ! This delightful ruffian was a hopeless inebriate, and was even despised by the natives, who regarded him as "fady," or unclean. They assured me that a crocodile had twice taken up its abode on the sandbank opposite his shanty, and that he would eventually fall a prey to that deity.

His bodyguard, or "escadrilla," as he would facetiously term it, in spite of their vile deeds, were an amusing sight. The leader, a gigantic fellow, was a fierce Bara brigand, and as an unmistakable emblem of his trade, wore the cast-off uniform of a French infantryman and carried an old Tower of London flintlock musket.

Another of the moving spirits among this

lawless crew was a little Antaimoro thief, who looked extremely ludicrous in a derelict helmet of English pattern, the quaintly bedecked frock-coat of a French infantryman, and an old tattered pair of canvas spats ! I tried hard to elicit the life-romance of that pair of spats, but in vain !

Half a dozen more of similarly garbed scoundrels, ready to steal anything, kill, maim or torture man, beast or child, were retained by the Swiss ex-captain, and were it not for the 150 miles of drought-stricken country separating him from the nearest Government fort, he would long ago have been arraigned before the tribunals at Tuléar. One of his daring confederates, venturing too close to civilisation, was recently captured, and received a sentence of two years' penal servitude in the Isle of Ste. Marie. His offence was that of chaining up his two native wives for three whole days and nights in the bush without giving them either food or water.

Once, in the Upper Mangoky Valley, our worthy captain and his Bara lieutenant arrived at a village and alighted at the hut of an old widowed chieftainess, whose splendid

herd of cattle at once roused their cupidity. Purchase was out of the question, for they had neither the means to buy, nor the persuasive powers necessary to conduct the customary diplomatic palavers prior to a sale, but their ready wits soon devised a plan suitable to the end in view. Hanging up their jackets in the hut, they told the woman that they would have a look round the village before returning to the meal which she hospitably offered. In due course, they came back, and on entering the hut one of them promptly exclaimed, in tremendously excited tones, that two bags of silver, amounting to 400 dollars in all, had been stolen from the pocket of his coat during his absence. In vain the poor woman pleaded her innocence, but the villains persisted in their base accusation, and finally drove off their hostess's cattle with the threat that they would report her to the authorities and have her imprisoned. Needless to say, they were never seen again in the vicinity of that village.

Many other instances of a similar kind frequently occur in the remoter parts of the western interior, where the extreme inaccessibility of the mountainous districts, the lack

of rail or water communication, the absence of telegraphic or postal facilities, combine to render futile any move or supervision on the part of Government or military officials.

Once, after riding some forty miles on mule-back in the Fiheranana Valley, I reached the "farm" of a French colonist, who held a concession of two to three thousand acres from the Government. The day was fiercely hot, and the arduous nature of the travelling had been accentuated by the precipitous and rocky path which my beast had negotiated on emerging from the Sandstone Gorges. The distance that I had intended to traverse before noon was not an impossible one, but my lips were cracked and my tongue swollen, for I had exhausted my water-supply and had missed my way to the river; so I called a halt and begged a drink from the planter.

He invited me into his one-roomed hut, which was devoid of either chairs, table, or bed (he slept on matting like a native), and offered me a seat on an empty absinthe case while he brought me water. When he arrived with the liquid, I found it was turgid and brackish from the rock-salt in the mountains, but he did me a great honour by pouring me



FOREST REFLECTIONS.

out half a tumblerful of Benedictine, and suggesting that I should swallow it as an appetiser before quenching my terrible thirst with the filthy water in the carafe. I mixed the two and found the concoction far less unpleasant than the reader might imagine.

On conversing with my host, I found out that he had left France for some misdemeanour or other, the nature of which he did not explain, and that he was quite satisfied with the simple life. I subsequently discovered that he was a confirmed absinthe drinker, and was unapproachable save when his stock of liquor had run out. In his lucid moments he was a student of natural history, and had discovered several new plants of considerable economic value, as well as some hitherto unknown species of crustacea and fishes in the river.

It did not come as a surprise to me to find the ubiquitous Scotchman in Madagascar, but as a friend of mine, who is himself a Scot, explains, the man “frae north o’ the Tweed, like a goat, will thrive where no other beast can exist.”

One of these children of Caledonia, settled

on the plateau above Tongobory on the Onilahy River, some twenty years ago, married a Sakalava woman, and has lived in native style ever since. He is reticent with newcomers and pretends to speak the native dialect only; though I believe he can be thawed by a present of his native beverage, after regaling himself on which he is apt to forget the Sakalava tongue and revert to "homespun." He seems to earn a precarious living by cattle-breeding; otherwise, his only occupation is hunting the river-hog, in which he excels, his pack of hounds being noted for their stamina and pluck throughout Fiheranana.

Another Scot (who stayed with me during my residence upon the coast) is a fine old mariner, and has been engaged for nearly forty years in the coasting trade. He knows every inch of the coast, and had explored the remotest corners of the island. By the exercise of his national thrift he had managed to buy two schooners, but just before I made his acquaintance, he had lost the larger of them on the coral reef off Mayotta in the Comoro Isles. In spite of his advancing years, the courageous old fellow



CARRYING HOME THE "CHASE"—WILD PIG.
Onilahy Valley.



THE MOZAMBIQUE TURTLE, TULÉAR.

still talked of the day when he would be able to replace the lost vessel.

Among the few other Britishers resident in Western Madagascar, I chanced upon a Londoner. He had served during the Boer War as a volunteer, and on the cessation of hostilities chose to earn a living by transporting cattle across the Mozambique Channel. Subsequently, he drifted into the Sakalava country, and now I would defy any one to tell that he was once a member of the glorious C.I.V. Barefooted, a blood brother to the village chief and married to a Vezo woman, he was living a hand-to-mouth existence, and when not superintending the cutting of mangrove bark for export, was dependent on the charity of his wife's relations.

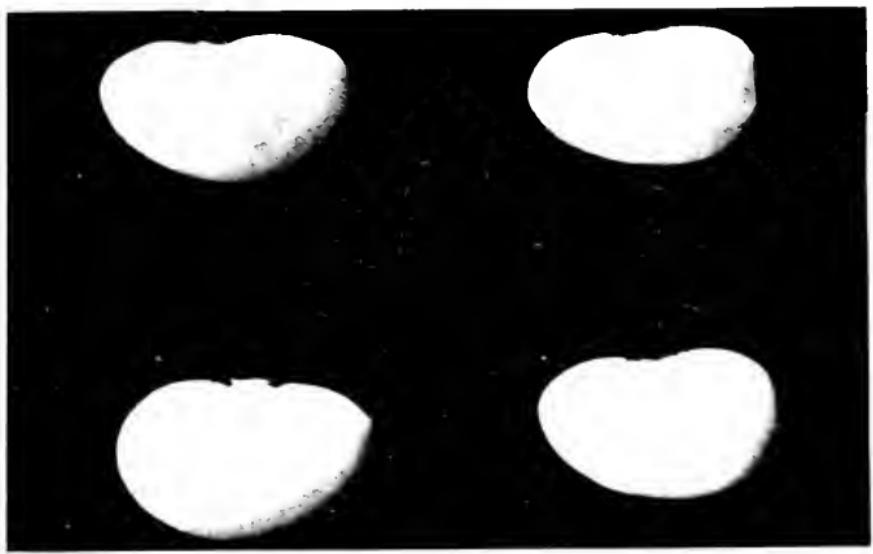
CHAPTER VII

THE BUTTER-BEAN

THE home of the Lima bean (*Phaseolus limensis*) is in the valleys that run down to the Pacific coast in the vicinity of Lima, Peru, between latitudes 11° and 15° South. In the fifteenth century; the Spanish conquistadores introduced the plant into Southern California, where it flourished, and was successfully cultivated as far north as San Francisco. Owing to climatic and other conditions, the Lima bean, when grown in California, changed its colour and size and became the variety known as the Californian Lima bean (*Phaseolus americanus*), which has a finer flavour than the original Lima bean and possesses the great advantage of being weevil-free.

Remarkably enough, the sub-species, *i.e.* the Californian “sport” from the Lima bean, became established in Madagascar by

THE PUFFED BUTTER BEANS (*Phaseolus capensis*).
The bean and pods as we grew it in the Tsimihalina River districts. First crop of 1951. Note the puffed, wet, and



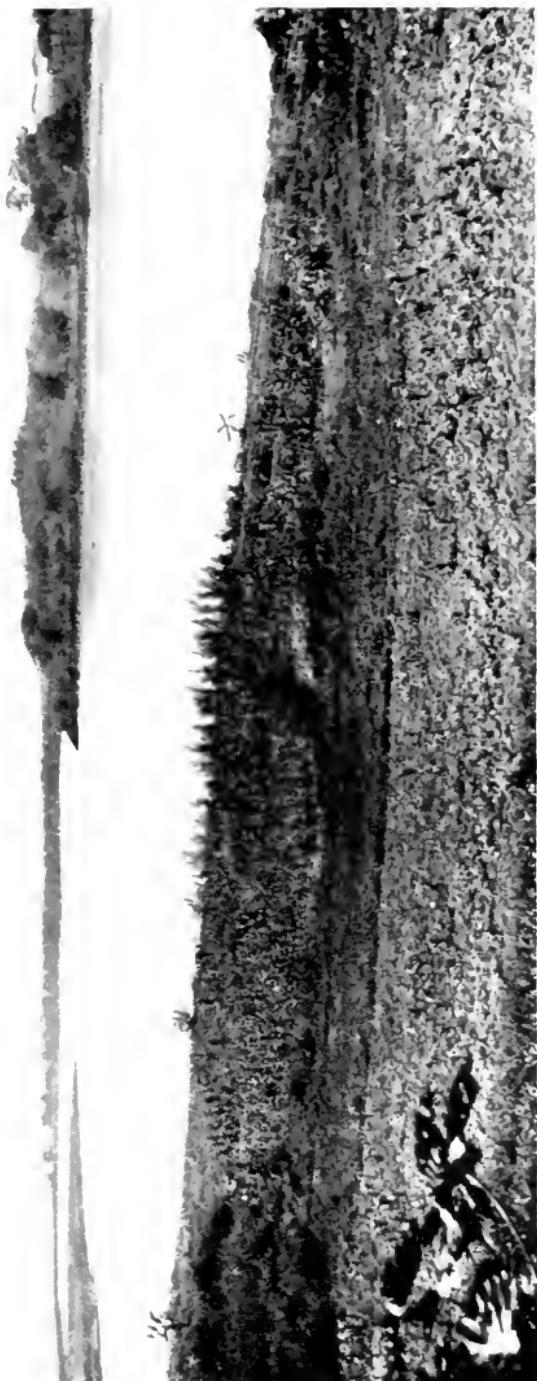
a pure accident, and the resulting plant produced a fruit similar to what, for convenience' sake, I will term its grandparent, but far surpassing it in size, colour, flavour, and fecundity. The conditions under which the Malagasies cultivate their crops more nearly approach those under which the ancient Inca agriculturists laboured, so that it is not surprising that the bean reverted in Madagascar to the Lima characteristics ; but whereas the curse of South American cereal production is the black fly or weevil, this obnoxious pest has fortunately hitherto failed to put in an appearance in the Great African Island.

The story of the origin of the Lima bean's cultivation in Madagascar is a curious and interesting one. I managed to elicit what I believe is the correct version, after many prolonged cabaros (palavers) with ancient Masi-koro chiefs, whose prodigious capacity for the strongly alcoholised French export wine was evidence of their long acquaintance with the foreigner. They informed me that in 1864, or thereabouts (the date I obtained from a Norwegian missionary of many years' residence), some New Bedford (U.S.A.) whalers established a station in St. Augustin's Bay,

about twenty miles to the south of Tuléar, and to them, Mahafaly kings sent their emissaries to trade. The American sailors bartered their ship's stores for fresh fruit and meat, and among the articles obtained by the natives were some Californian Lima beans. These beans were planted in the rich soil by the waters of the winding Onilahy, and here arose the first plantation of the *Phaseolus* in Madagascar.

Since that date, an enormous development has taken place, and the economic changes resulting therefrom have altered the aspect of the whole western littoral, for where before the advent of the butter-bean no human habitation was to be seen, there now exist villages and ports engaged in growing and shipping this increasingly valuable produce, known to traders as Pois du Cap (Cape Peas).

I have failed to find any authentic record of the presence of the Lima bean in Madagascar prior to the aforementioned date, and the footnote referring to Pois du Cap in Captain Pasfield Oliver's edition of *Drury's Annual* is incorrect. Drury mentions caravances as being one of the articles of food



BEAN PLANTATION AT BEFAMOUY DEVASTATED BY LOCUSTS.

Only the river margins are cultivable.

in the Mahafaly country, and these caravances are translated as Cape peas (*Pois du Cap*) ; but caravances are clearly the Portuguese and Spanish “garvanzos,” or chick peas, which are of the pea family and do not resemble a bean at all.

The name *Pois du Cap* is certainly a misnomer, for the Lima bean differs in appearance from any species of pea existent, and to this unhappy nomenclature the editorial error is no doubt due. The Creoles of La Réunion and Mauritius are probably responsible for the word “*Pois du Cap*,” because the first trade in the beans was done with the Mascarene Islands, and the small coasting schooners bearing the produce beat up to them from the southernmost point of Madagascar, called Cap Ste. Marie. It is possible, again, that French traders in Tuléar christened the beans *Pois du Cap*, seeing that canoes laden with them rounded Cape St. Augustin as they emerged from the growing districts on the Onilahy River ; but I incline to the belief that my first theory is the more probable one.

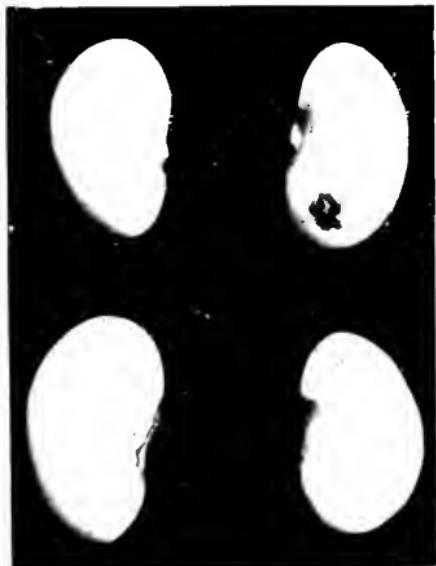
Within the last two or three years there has been a steadily growing interest in and

appreciation of the Madagascar bean in England, the article being commonly known as the butter-bean. This is doubtless due to an increasing knowledge of the food-value of beans in general, as well as to the convenience of their use as a vegetable during a shortage in the crops of green stuffs. The ever-growing cult of vegetarianism has also doubtless exerted an influence on the demand, for to those who shun a meat diet the bean becomes a staple article of food. In this respect, the butter-bean will eventually oust the haricot-bean, for it possesses a much richer flavour, is more easily cooked, and is free from the haricot-bean's tendency to engender flatulence.

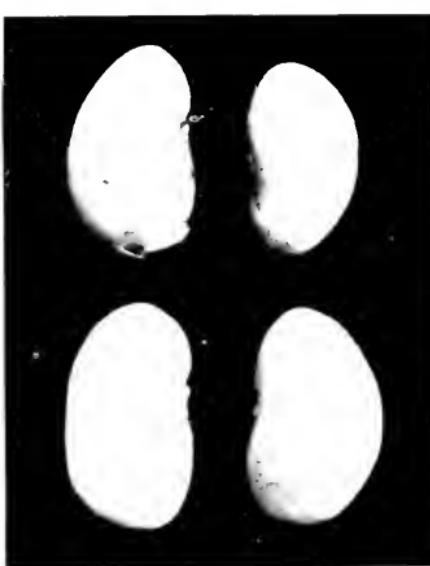
The consumer, however, when purchasing butter-beans, is generally supplied with the old Lima bean, which, as I have stated before, is greatly inferior to the Madagascar variety in every respect. There are many buyers, nevertheless, who are alive to this difference, and the following figures of the Madagascar bean trade with this country will corroborate the statement. In 1899 only 100 tons, valued at some £800, were exported, whereas last year (1911) some 6,000 tons, valued at



1



3



4

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MADAGASCAR BUTTER-BEAN *Phaseolus luteolus*.

1. Original sowings: the Onilahy River St. Augustin, 1870-9.
2. The beans as they grew from Onilahy seed at Tulear, 1900-3.
3. The original sowings in the Mangoky Valley, 1904-10.
4. The beans as they grew from original seed at Ambohibé, 1910-12.

Note the gradual elimination of spots and pink eyes.

£150,000, left the west-coast ports. British trade with Madagascar in 1911 increased 38 per cent.; Germany's suffered a decline of 11 per cent.; and France's showed an increase of only 14 per cent. over that of the preceding year. The deduction is obvious.

In spite of this growing commerce along the western littoral of Madagascar, the method of cultivation might belong to the days subsequent to man's ejection from the Garden of Eden, for nothing could be more primitive. Let me briefly outline the modus operandi of the happy Masikoro agriculturist.

The wet season in the south-western portion of the island occurs during our winter months of December, January, and February, when the torrential rains that fall among the blue Isalo mountains rush down in roaring torrents and overflow the banks of the rivers that fall into the Mozambique Channel. The country on either side of the rivers is flooded and develops into marshes, though little or no rain falls in the actual maritime plain itself.

In March, when the flood waters subside, the Masikoros, who have been tending their herds of cattle on the wide grassy plains, flock down to the banks of the rivers and begin to

build the barraraty reed huts which are to be their dwellings during the dry season. There is no irksome cultivation or manuring of land previous to planting ; the floods have left behind them a soil, thick, red, and oozy, into which the bean planter deposits his seeds, sowing three in each hole. Previous to the date when these beans became popular in England, two white and one red seed were dropped into each earth-pocket, owing to the fallacious idea that the red was stronger than the white seed, and that the plant resulting from the coloured bean supported its weaker companions. Traders, however, are now combating this curious superstition of the Masikoros, because white beans command a much higher price in the market than the parti-coloured ones, of which Réunion is the principal buyer.

During the six months that the crops are maturing, the farmer assiduously leaves them alone, probably feeling that mother earth and sunshine have a satisfactory knowledge of their own peculiar business. Should the migratory locust appear, well, it is bad for the beans, but much worse for the locust, for to the Masikoro he is delicious eating. If there



A NATIVE WITH BEAN SOUBIQUES ARRIVING AT MARKET.



UP-COUNTRY MASIKOROS BRINGING THE CROP DOWN TO THE COAST.

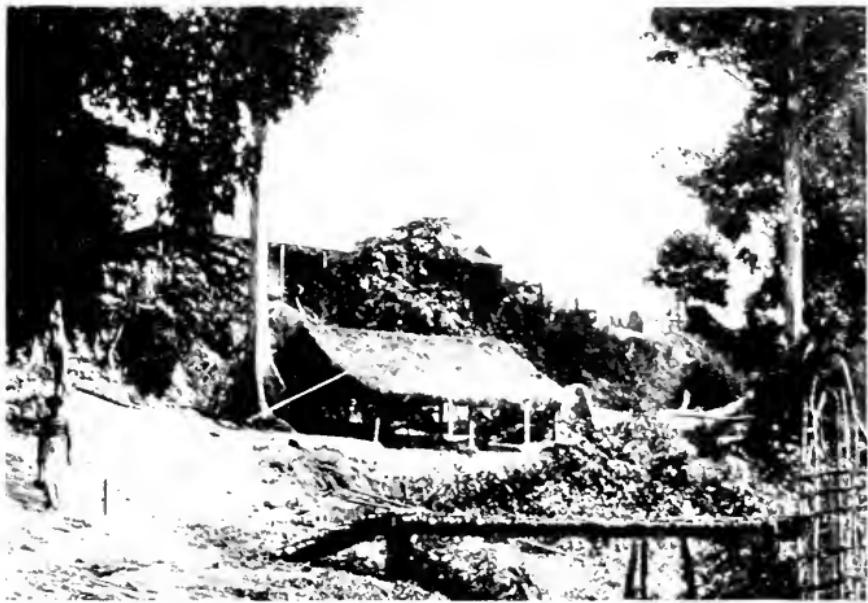
is prospect of a satisfactory harvest, an Indian or Arab trader may be willing to make a pecuniary advance, and then our adaptable cultivator will instil a certain amount of gaiety into idle days by investing in the red wine that the Levantine trader is ever ready to supply at comparatively West-end-of-London prices.

Meanwhile, the beans are flourishing and look just like a field of ordinary runner beans (without the supporting sticks), similar to those belonging to market gardeners at Kelvedon in Essex. Whether the *Phaseolus capensis* would crop better if supported by stakes, I am at present unable to say; I am inclined to think that if the plants were grown in the English way, the young flower-buds would wither and fall before being fertilised, owing to exposure to the scorching south winds. When grown along the ground, they naturally escape the full force of these dry blasts, and the foliage is probably then in a more suitable position to keep the soil moist about the roots by preventing rapid evaporation in direct sunshine. The resistance offered by this plant to heat and drought is simply amazing, and even when the dry

conditions have been such that prickly pears and cacti are lying withered and sickly, when the maize stalks are roasted to brittle sticks and the leaves of the banana palms are sere and tattered, the bean plantation is still a mass of lush verdure, as refreshing as a pool in a desert land.

When ripe, the bean pods are about the same size as our runner beans, though their coarse texture prevents their being eaten green in the manner of French beans. In Madagascar, the ripe fruit is never eaten, although this is the only product we see in Europe. The natives shell the beans when they are still green and soft, and cook them as we cook broad beans, only they are subsequently mashed to a green purée, and thus prepared, this vegetable affords a very tasty dish. I should like to remark at this point that broad beans belong to the *Vicia* tribe (allied to the vetches), and are distinct from the *Phaseolus* family, although many writers have fallen into the error of describing Madagascar beans as broad beans.

When the pods are ripe, the Masikoros pick them and fling them in a large heap, which is then subjected to the flail to extract



CREOLE BEAN-PLANTER'S BUNGALOW.
Mangoky River.



THE FIRST YOUNG OSTRICHES HATCHED IN MADAGASCAR.

the fruit. They are now sorted by the ramatous (native women) and placed in "soubiques" or bowl-shaped baskets of plaited raffia. These soubiques are hung, one at either end of a stout bamboo pole, and at dawn the ramatous set out in Indian file, and bear their precious burdens perhaps twenty or thirty miles to the nearest store, where the wily Indian or Arab trader takes delivery on scales well trained to their profession.

The now wealthy farmer settles down to enjoy the fruits of his labour, and gives himself up to a prolonged series of debauches until the depleted state of his exchequer and the coming rains drive him back once more to his wives, cattle, and his native village.

The annual influx of money into Western Madagascar due to bean cultivation has caused a state of affairs almost Gilbertian in its absurdity, for there is nothing along the whole coast on which the Masikoro can spend his earnings save red wine, which he buys from the Greek trader. Those who do not patronise the wine-seller generally give their silver to their wives to be melted down and fashioned into bangles ; or if they accept

gold payment for their beans, the coins are woven with pearls into their wives' hair, and are never parted with again. It is amazing what an amount of European golden coinage is thus "locked up" upon the skulls of "fair" Malagasies, subsequently to be buried with them.

A vivid instance of the total absence of means of spending money was afforded me by a Greek trader from whom I had purchased a quantity of tinned provisions. Before proceeding on my journey into the interior, I gave this merchant a cheque on a banking house established in one of the larger ports on the coast. Quite by chance, I had occasion to visit this man's store on my return journey, some three months later, and in the course of my bargaining for fresh purchases, it transpired that he had not cashed my previous cheque. As I had already closed my account at the port mentioned above, I questioned him on the subject, and in reply he took me behind the wooden partition of his miserable hut and showed me a large safe, which he flung open. It was literally crammed full of five-franc pieces, British gold coins, and French bank-



A GROUP OF MASTIKOROS,
Sukabaya bean cultivators, Bekapito, Lower Mangky Valley.

notes, and he explained to me that if he had presented my draft he would have received five-franc pieces in exchange, whereas he really had no room to store any more money ! Truly an uncommon state of affairs in the twentieth-century business world !

CHAPTER VIII

WAYS OF COMMUNICATION AND COMMERCE

WAYS and means of communication in nearly all parts of the island are bad, but Western Madagascar has certainly been most neglected in this respect, while in the far south-west there are no roads at all. The transport way from An-dranopasy to the important strategical post of Manja (one of the most unhealthy in the island) may be considered as passable in the dry season for vehicular traffic of a rough kind, and the same may be said of the track cut by the Foreign Legion from Befandriana to the Mangoky and Fiheranana Rivers. Up-country, however, the only possible means of conveyance is by filanjana, along the narrow native footpaths.

The telegraph service is frequently suspended owing to the collapse of the rotten, soft wood poles, and this constantly recurring



ON THE MARCH TO THE BIRDS

catastrophe is hardly to be wondered at, for a rhinoceros beetle can bore a tunnel through one of these poles in a single night. Why the Government does not employ suitable material for these posts, I am at a loss to say, for the costliest material would, in the long run, prove more economical than the incessant renewal of this cheap and inferior timber. For three months in a year the telegraph lines hardly work at all, owing to electrical disturbances created by terrific thunderstorms, and interruptions of service due to this cause frequently extend over a period of six weeks at a time.

There is no shadow of doubt that Madagascar is a land of great and very varied natural resources, and only awaits the solution of the question of labour to make it France's finest colonial possession. There are vast tracts of still absolutely unexplored country, whose hidden treasures will before long become known to the adventurous modern prospector, and then a welcome change from the present sad neglect may be expected.

In the country at present known, gold is found in considerable quantities ; and though

quartz veins traverse the rocks of the central plateau, the principal deposits are alluvial. Iron is very plentiful, and is skilfully worked by the Sakalava, whose wooden forges are to be seen in every village. Bitumen deposits exist, but are difficult of access; and the precious stones which are continually being discovered in the central heights invite scientific exploitation. Graphite is also found in considerable quantities, but has a peculiarly lustrous appearance owing to the large percentage of mica associated with it. Though this quality is unsuitable for pencil making, it is valuable for lubricating and electrical purposes.

Near Bemokaraha, in the mountains to the north-west of Maintirano, the natives dig a hard, brown mineral jelly from the rocks, and this substance is in great demand on the coast for caulking the seams of the trading schooners. I have good reason to believe that oil exists in the Menabé district, but no European has yet been fortunate enough to locate this valuable product. In the low-lying regions of the east, sugar, cotton, coffee, vanilla, and rice thrive; while on the west, gum, copal, rubber, raffia, hides,

horn, tortoise-shell, and beans form the principal exports.

The three chief products of the west coast are hides, rubber, and beans, and all these are capable of enormous expansion. Beans I have treated at length in another chapter, so that I shall here restrict my attention to hides and rubber.

On the high ground beyond the malarial coastal belt there are large areas of land eminently suitable for cattle-raising, and the Sakalava is an excellent cattle-breeder. In fact, there is nothing in the world that this warlike native loves better than his herds, and the only difficulty in the way of trade is to induce him to part with them, for he looks upon them with some of the veneration of the Indian for the zebu. Perhaps one of the most striking of all the features of the west coast is the extent of beautiful grazing lands (capable of sustaining thousands upon thousands of animals) without a living human being for miles.

In the Menabé province alone, I should say there were some twenty thousand head of wild cattle, and this is a very low estimate of their numbers. The hides from these

animals fetch a much higher price than those of the domesticated species, because they are of a tougher texture and greater thickness. It requires no little skill to track down and kill a wild bull, but the Sakalava usually hunt the young calves, or failing that, seek to drive the whole herd over a precipice or into a deep morass. These natives are most dexterous in skinning an ox, and set to work almost before the animal has breathed its last. I found the nickel Lebel bullet hardly satisfactory against wild cattle, especially when infuriated, and had to use a 9 mm. Mauser with the lead exposed.

When in the bush hunting, it is extremely difficult to obtain tender meat, so that I adopted the following plan in vogue among some of the pioneer colonists. A wild ox, when shot, is hung up to a convenient tree for a couple of days, at the end of which period the exterior has already become infested with maggots, owing to the heat. When this decayed portion has all been cleanly cut away, the interior flesh is fit for consumption and beautifully tender. This may appear an extremely wasteful method of obtaining a tender joint, but serves to



MAMAFALY CATTLE.
Near Tongolory, Omiliay River.

illustrate the extraordinary abundance of the "game."

The Malagasies regularly burn the forest to provide suitable clearings for pasturing their cattle, and the initial burning takes place in the dry season, when the resinous vegetation burns like tinder, the only surviving trees being the Sakoa (*Sclerocarya caffra*), which are extraordinarily resistant to the ravages of the bush fires. After the next rains, a rich and luscious pasturage springs up on these savannah-like wastes, which then form ideal feeding-grounds for both wild and domestic cattle. On first seeing these tracts of cleared country, I was at once reminded of the rich grazing-lands of Southern Brazil.

The French colonists have made a great point of the need for legislation to prevent the Malagasies from burning the forest for the purpose of providing the above-mentioned clearings, and they have based their agitation upon the resulting destruction of wild-rubber vines. Though strongly deprecating the absolutely ruthless destruction of forest areas, which has created sandy deserts in many other parts of the world, I venture to

oppose the colonial point of view, for scientifically cultivated plantation rubber is gradually making the exploitation of wild vine rubber an unprofitable undertaking. On the other hand, the rise in prices of hides and the large demand for carcases by the Majunga canning establishments have combined to make cattle-raising far more important than rubber-vine tapping in North-western Madagascar.

However, as rubber has been very much before the public of late, I will especially consider those caoutchouc-yielding plants that are peculiar to the west and south-west of the island, that is to say, between Majunga on the north and Cap Ste. Marie at the southern extremity.

The source of most of the rubber collected in the northern portion of the above-mentioned zone is the *Landolphia* vine, and the species most commonly met with is *L. perrieri*, both in its true and *ambatensis* varieties. Next in importance, rank two trees of the *Mascarenhaisia* family, namely the *arborescens* and *longifolia* kinds, which flourish in all places where suitable soil in conjunction with constant moisture in the earth is present,

in fact, *M. longifolia* prefers running water. One other species of *Mascarenhaisia* grows in bare places where decomposed gneiss supplies the only humus. This is *M. angustifolia*, whose dark red flowers with pale yellowish-green corollas, tinged with purple at the edges, are easily distinguishable.

The most important district for the rubber-collecting industry in Western Madagascar is the large tract bounded on the north by the Manambolo River, in the south by the Mangoky, and whose eastern extremities are the Bemaraha and Isalo mountain ranges.

Quantitatively speaking, the greatest export is of the red Kabokah rubber, incorrectly called "rooty gingerbread" by British traders, for the roots of *L. perrieri*, which is the sole source of this variety, play no part whatsoever in the tapping or collecting. The Sakalava cut down the vines and bring them whole to their villages, where the extracting is done by their wives, and a very tedious process it is, a woman taking a month to prepare about $2\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of rubber. The process is as follows.

The vine is heated over a wood fire to coagulate the latex in the veins, and the bark,

while still moist, is stripped from the wood in lengths of about 18 inches to 24 inches. When dry, the bark is beaten out with a wooden mallet on a piece of stone until only the rubber veins remain. Where Indian traders have easy access to the natives, sulphuric acid is used, and this method is infinitely to be preferred, for not only is the labour curtailed, but the ensuing product, a clean, salmon-pink rubber of great strength, is far superior. The scrap taken from the tapped vines is made up into "Kanokano," or "mottled pinky," as it is known to the trade. Thus we find three distinct kinds of prepared rubber emanating from the *Landolphia perrieri*.

One of the Asclepiadeæ, the *Marsdenia verrucosa*, furnishes a fair amount of latex towards the end of the wet season, and the reason for this is curious. The stem itself contains no rubber-yielding latex, but the fruits which hang in clusters on every plant give quite a useful quantity of caoutchouc. After the rains in May and June, the natives collect the fruit, and, having cut off the ends, allow the latex to drip into a receptacle. Some fruit of the tamarind is then added, and



GIANT RUBBER VINES AND BARABANJA TREES.

the mixture is heated over a fire until coagulation takes place.

This Bokabé rubber is fashioned into large balls, black at the surface but greyish in the interior, and is of fair strength, but lacks elasticity. The prepared product can always be distinguished from other Madagascar sorts by the particles of fluff imbedded in it, which particles find their way into the latex when incisions are made in the fruit.

A great contrast to the Bokabé is furnished by the Lombiry rubber, which also comes from one of the Asclepiadeæ (*Cryptostegia grandiflora*) found in the most southerly of the western rubber-producing districts—namely, that which lies between the Mangoky and the Linta Rivers. The plant grows along the sea swamps and round the margins of lakes and marshes throughout the Menabé, and differs from the Marsdenia in this respect—viz. while the latter contains no latex of value in the stem, the *Cryptostegia grandiflora* has none in the fruit, but yields more and more latex the nearer one taps to the roots. The resulting caoutchouc is weak, in fact eleven-twelfths of the latex consist of vegetable juices of no commercial value.

Still farther south, we find another shrub-like rubber-yielding plant, called *Cryptostegia madagascariensis*; but as it is inferior even to the *grandiflora* variety, I need not consider it at any length here.

I have seen it stated by French botanical and other writers that the rubber collected from the fruit of the *Marsdenia* is of better quality than that procured from the stems, but such assertions are quite erroneous, and only serve to show that the writers have no first-hand knowledge of their subject, for not an ounce of rubber can be gathered from the stems of the *Marsdenia*. As I have stated above, the caoutchouc is obtained only from the ripe fruits at the commencement of the dry weather.

The gem of the west coast is the barabanja or hazandrano tree (*Mascarenhaisia longifolia*); but unfortunately this tree, so rich in rubber yielding, is, as I have mentioned before, only found in moist places. The trees grow very closely together in groups of from two thousand to ten thousand, with long straight stems and clean bark, the diameter of the stems attaining 24 inches in favourable soil. The rubber from this tree is equal to the finest Hevea in



TAPPING THE MASCARENHAISIA LONGIFOLIA.

texture and strength, and if any future exists for Madagascar caoutchouc, it indubitably lies in this direction, for *Landolphia perrieri* and *spherocarpa* are fast becoming extinct. The last-mentioned vine gives a rich, pinky rubber which is highly prized ; but unfortunately, the natives generally mix the latex of both Landolphiias without improving the quality of either.

The *Secamonaopsis madagascariensis* is another vine which furnishes rubber, though it is rather too rich in resin for general purposes. The product is called Vahimainty by the natives (vahi = vine, mainty = black), after the colour of the vine.

South of the Mangoky, the most important rubber is that which finds its way into the London market in the shape of twisted balls, or "niggers," as the trade calls them. "Kom-pitsy" is the name given to the product by the Sakalava and Mahafaly, and the shrub which provides the latex is the *Gonocrypta grevei*. These greyish aromatic "niggers" are eagerly sought after and command high prices in London.

In the far south of the island, an Euphorbia called Intisy is the source of another species of

"niggers," but as I have fully described the tree in a former chapter, I shall not discuss it further here.

Ostrich farming has of late years made great strides in the environs of Tuléar, and in spite of the lack of those luscious alfalfa pastures beloved by these birds, the undertaking seems to thrive. Some feathers taken from native-bred birds were shown to me and were exceptionally fine plumes. London-made incubators are in universal use, and give excellent results, and as the climate is extremely suitable for ostriches, a great future is assured for this industry. There are now six large farms and one Government experimental establishment; all the former are owned by French colonists, and the time-expired N.C.O.'s of the Foreign Legion make reliable overseers. As the visitor rides past the spacious bamboo enclosures, the female birds indulge in a grotesque waltzing movement which ends in a mad whirl; and on a man's entry into the run, the pirouetting is renewed with increased vigour. The males are apt to become very vicious, and many nasty accidents have occurred owing to the lack of vigilance on the part of the Malagasy attendants.

While on the subject of commerce, let me state that the French colonial merchant does not seem to have benefited in a degree commensurate with the new development of business on the west coast. Whether his failure is due to lack of enterprise, or to the very peculiar methods of the one and only banking house established in the island, or to a lack of co-operation on the part of colonial officials, I cannot determine. The Government is inclined to attribute the failure of individual Frenchmen to the competition of the Indian, that Eastern trader complains bitterly of the bank's extortion, while the merchant himself blames both.

Government officials and merchants, however, lose sight of the fact that without the Gujerati Indian as a medium of intercourse, trade would come to a standstill, for no white man could withstand for long the trying climate of the remote interior, coupled with the present hard conditions of life obtaining there. The worthy Asiatic seems to thrive amid these awful surroundings, and an Anglo-Indian would have thoroughly enjoyed the spectacle of a tall Gujerati, whom I saw, supervising the shipping of his bean

purchases on the canoes at Marolafy. A large service revolver hung very conspicuously at his girdle, and his hand had a trick of frequently wandering to the weapon, much to the terror of the Vezos, who were simply falling over one another in their anxiety to complete the loading of the merchandise in order to appease the "wrath" of this blood-thirsty fire-eater.

Without a doubt, the banking monopoly is a serious hindrance to the proper exploitation of the colony, and I cannot imagine similar conditions being tolerated for one instant in a British or German colonial possession. Traders are forced to accept very unfavourable terms, and while this fatuous policy is adhered to, I venture to predict that no great expansion of business is likely to take place, for as matters stand at present any fresh enterprise needing a little capital to launch it is practically foredoomed to failure.

The import trade is comparatively unimportant, for the unsophisticated Sakalava has few wants and has no desire to buy anything beyond richly coloured lambas of European manufacture, and French red wine.

Great Britain's export trade to this island consists, so far as I can ascertain, of a few cases of peppermint lozenges annually!

The representatives of Hamburg firms, owing to their excellent business methods and enterprise, enjoy a greater degree of prosperity than most of the French establishments. Alert to the absolute necessity of the Indian as an agent in the interior, they encourage these traders to the utmost extent.

To conclude, it has always been a matter for conjecture to me why no British mercantile house has been able to maintain a footing in Madagascar, where trade was once practically in British hands.

CHAPTER IX

NOTES ON THE FAUNA AND FLORA OF SOUTH-WESTERN MADAGASCAR—SOME NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF WESTERN MADAGASCAR—SOME NOTES ON THE FLORA OF WESTERN AND SOUTH-WESTERN MADAGASCAR

TO describe adequately the fauna and flora of even the south-western portion of Madagascar would require an abler pen than mine, coupled with the skill of a trained observer and a very extensive scientific knowledge, and even to a man possessed of these accomplishments; the task would present not a few knotty problems. When I mention, with regard to the flora, that there are over 7,000 species, of which no less than 70 per cent. are endemic to the island, the reader will appreciate that a full description, even were it within my humble powers, would certainly be beyond the scope of this book.

Again, the fauna of Madagascar differs

from that existing in any other country in the world (whole families of the larger mammalia being absent), and would require a specialist in zoology to treat satisfactorily, so that I feel that no apology is necessary for the sketchiness of this portion of my work, which only deals with certain salient features of both fauna and flora as would interest an ordinary traveller curious as to the nature of the animal and plant life that he sees around him.

The very first feature about the Malagasy fauna that strikes the inquiring visitor, and more especially the sportsman, is the absence of the larger mammals, such as the lion, leopard, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, and elephant. This fact is peculiarly astonishing when the vast extent of tropical forest, the numerous waterways, the torrid sandy deserts and cooler uplands are considered, for they would at once suggest the presence of these animals, all the more so because the island is comparatively closely situated to the continent of Africa. Yet, on the other hand, Madagascar possesses several species of mammals quite peculiar to itself, which, though of absorbing interest to the naturalist, are

not sufficiently dangerous to man to rouse the enthusiasm of the sportsman to any great degree.

By far the most numerous and characteristic of the mammalia are the Lemuroidea—that is the lemurs and lemur-like animals. Nearly two score representatives of this species are found in Madagascar, and these graceful creatures are sprightly and agreeable inhabitants of the otherwise sombre and strangely silent forest region.

Those of them which come under the scientific name of *Propithecidæ* are diurnal animals, and may often be seen at morning or evening in bands leaping from tree to tree in search of food. During the heat of the day; they rest in the shade of the branches of the tallest trees. Generally speaking, however, the lemurs are nocturnal animals, and, therefore, difficult to observe, and I have no doubt that the superstitious awe in which some of these harmless and beautiful creatures are held by the Malagasies is due to their activity during the hours of darkness, for nothing is so full of fearsome mystery to the mind of the savage as the phenomenon of night.

The lemurs vary very much in size, some being as small as a squirrel, while others are as large as a cat, and certain species of them store their reserve of fat to carry them over the dry season in their tails, which during that period present a comically swollen appearance. The food of these quaint animals is various, some of the species preferring an animal to a vegetable diet, but those which are caught and tamed by the natives seem to incline more to the latter in captivity.

Classed among the Lemuroidea is the puzzling type known as the *Cheiromys madagascariensis*, or aye-aye. Though at one time and another much has been written by naturalists about this fascinating animal, the aye-aye is still somewhat of a mystery. Naturally, its nocturnal habits render a close study of its mode of living difficult, and accounts of its behaviour in captivity differ in many important points from those of its life in the forest. At first sight, the aye-aye appeared to me all eyes, ears, and claws, backed by a fluffy tail, and it is my impression that it is more like a squirrel than a lemur.

The Masikoros with whom I came in contact in South-west Madagascar regard the aye-aye with superstitious awe, and only a fairly high reward will induce even the most rational and hard-headed among them to go into the bush after specimens.

The fosa (*Cryptoprocta ferox*), an animal also peculiar to the island, is a tremendous cat of carnivorous habits, and like a huge weasel in shape, only it is more formidable than a weasel in its depredations among poultry. The Malagasies are very much afraid of it, and say it is not at all loth to attack a man. When pursued, it emits, skunk-like, a most disagreeable odour from its anal pouch.

In the western forests and river-valleys the only wild beast of any size is the variety of wild pig known as *Potamochærus larvatus*. I believe the eminent French naturalist Grandidier claims to have found a larger species in the eastern half of Madagascar, but the animal I hunted in the Sakalava territory was an ordinary river-hog. He is an extremely ugly beast, and his excavations for roots, which are performed nocturnally, are visible everywhere in the forest.

One night, when walking round some of the newly established ostrich-farms near Tuléar, I was startled to see in the moonlight, beside a hedge of prickly pears, what I took to be a giant hedgehog, but on more closely approaching the animal, I discovered my error, for it proved to be a tenrec, of the Centetidæ family, of which there are no less than twenty-five species in Madagascar. The Sakalava appreciate the tail-less tenrec (*Trand-raka*) as an article of food, and capture them during the period of hibernation, for then the animal is in plump and good condition for eating. The diet of nearly all the tenrecs consists of earth-worms, insects, and roots, and the animals are very prolific, sometimes more than a dozen young ones being found in a single nest. I have eaten the tail-less tenrec, of which the Bourbon Creoles are so fond, but cannot say that I found the dish a great delicacy.

The wild cattle of the Menabé country are probably descendants of the original Portuguese importation in the seventeenth century, but the matter would be a difficult one upon which to express any positive opinion. A friend of mine, who has passed many years

in Madagascar, is of the opinion that they show a slight strain of the zebu, and tells me that in some of the specimens shot by him the faintest trace of a hump was discernible.

The Sakalava catch and tame a species of mongoose, which they call "vontsira," and train the animal to perform the office of rat- and mouse-catcher. Though quite a good servant in this capacity, the vontsira has a liking for domestic birds' eggs, and, if permitted, will soon commit havoc in the poultry-run.

As if to compensate Madagascar for her immunity from beasts of prey, Nature has given her an excellent substitute in the shape of the crocodile, and this disagreeable amphibian is met with in enormous numbers in every river, lake, and lagoon of the Sakalava country, very frequently attaining an immense size. When he tires of a fish diet, this monster will lie in wait for the canoes of the Vezos, who often behave as if no such thing as a crocodile existed, and only the sudden rise of an ugly snout and a vicious snap of a pair of cruel jaws will remind them that indiscriminate bathing in these rivers cannot be indulged in with impunity.

I must say that with regard to the Sakalava women, gross carelessness on their part is the cause of many a sad catastrophe. With native cheerfulness and absolute thoughtlessness, they amble down to the water's edge in the cool of the evening with their heavy earthenware pitchers poised gracefully on their curly heads—for the Masikoros of the Sakalava valleys bear no resemblance to the straight-haired Hova of the Imerina plateau. All is still; the tropical night is falling and casting its cool dark mantle on the tired and sun-scorched earth, when the woman pushes aside the high barraraty reeds with their sword-like blades and dips her vessel into the dark water beyond. Suddenly, the very marsh at her feet moves, as it were; a black, oblong object shoots sharply upwards, and a pair of hideous jaws have closed upon her arm or thigh.

Such a maimed victim was brought into the military post at Beroroha only a few hours before my arrival. The kind-hearted lieutenant in charge had washed the poor woman's wounds, and done his utmost to render them antiseptic, and his timely assistance, I am able to say, saved her life. This

very girl now limps about in her village of Fanjaka, but she no longer goes down to the Mangoky at dusk.

The village piedogs are cleverer. They, when their owners cross a river in their molangas or dug-outs, bark lustily at the water's edge for a full five minutes, thereby attracting every crocodile in the vicinity to the spot, for these creatures prefer toothsome members of the canine race to any other food. As soon as the dog has thus attained his object, he runs as fast as his legs will carry him for some hundreds of yards along the river bank, and then crosses to rejoin his master in comparative safety, for he has left all his enemies some distance down-stream, thrusting their snouts through the rushes in quest of their favourite delicacy, whose howling they had so recently heard. The natives have taught their dogs this ruse, and often make their canine pets howl by the river's brink to attract crocodiles, when they themselves wish to ford the stream some distance farther up or down.

My Makoa canoe-man, Marajy by name, once rescued himself very cleverly when seized by a crocodile on the Mangoky. As

he was pushing a heavily laden bean-canoe over a sandbank, his pole suddenly snapped and precipitated him into the shallow water where a voay (the native name for the crocodile) of considerable dimensions had been basking. The reptile promptly seized my man above the elbow of the left arm, but Marajy, who had fought very bravely on the Sakalava side against the French, had neither lost his courage nor his coolness in the moment of danger, and turning on his back like lightning, thrust the thumb and forefinger of his right hand with all his might into the amphibian's eyes. Maddened by the pain, the brute at once opened its jaws and released the mangled shoulder, so that the exhausted and half-drowned negro managed to scramble back into his canoe.

I was unfortunately not present when this accident occurred, but on overtaking Marajy's canoe, noticed the plight of the suffering occupant. I washed the injured limb with some filtered drinking-water, and applied antiseptics to the wounds, and am glad to be able to relate that the brave canoeman completely recovered from his painful experience.

Accidents of a similar nature are constantly occurring in the rivers of South-west Madagascar, but the result is frequently fatal, especially if the victim seized by one of these monsters happens to be a youth or maiden. In spite of his ability to make frequent overland excursions, the crocodile never attacks a human being unless he is either in or extremely close to water—a fact which seems to indicate that the reptile is not confident of killing a man with his jaws alone, but likes to drag his prey under water, where suffocation promptly puts an end to the struggle. Once dead, the victim is stored in some subterranean hiding-place and devoured at leisure.

In the principal west-coast rivers, the voay lives in caverns with an entrance above and below the water-level. These caverns serve as dwelling-place and larder, and sometimes present a most gruesome sight when opened up by digging from the river-bank. Unless the sportsman is armed with a powerful modern rifle, he will usually fail to secure the Madagascar crocodile, for the quarry generally escapes to die in deep water. The only vulnerable portions are the head and immediately behind the forelegs, and even when

struck in these spots by a nickel bullet, the reptile has usually sufficient vitality left to wriggle off the sandbank into the turgid stream. Once in the water, he is as good as lost, for when the air leaves his body he sinks to the river-bed like a stone.

The inseparable companion of these loathsome creatures is the crocodile-bird (*Ardea gularis*), which rests in a one-legged attitude beside them as they lie with wide-open jaws, sunning themselves on the sand. This heron is a species of living toothpick, and its assiduous attendance on the crocodile has for explanation the simple fact that it consumes the numerous insects which enter the reptile's mouth in search of the food-remains lodged in the cavities of his formidable teeth.

The Sakalavas greatly prize the huge incisors of the *Crocodilus madagascariensis*, and adorn their heads and chests with these trophies, which are mounted with tightly strung blue and red beads. The skins of the few fine specimens which are recovered after being shot are cured and exported, and the fat-glands are boiled down into a creamy paste by the natives and used to remove

superfluous hair. The average length of the west-coast crocodile is from 8 to 10 feet, but in stagnant water and in some of the lagoons specimens measuring from 12 to 18 feet are sometimes secured.

Venomous snakes are conspicuous by their absence. A reptile of the boa species is, however, sometimes met with, but appears more formidable than it actually is, and death by snake-bite is unknown in the island.

Some of the spiders, on the contrary, are venomous, though whether their bite is fatal I cannot definitely state. The *Nephila madagascariensis* is, however, a formidable insect, and would easily cover the palm of a man's hand. The web of this species is strong enough to catch and retain small birds.

In the coastal belt of the Fiheranana country, numerous tortoises are to be found. These creatures possess a remarkable faculty for withstanding both hunger and thirst, and were it not so, they could not exist, for sometimes rain does not fall in the south-west for years on end. During these periods of drought, the tortoises lie dormant for several consecutive months. Their high-domed shells are very prettily marked, and their flesh is

highly esteemed by the Creoles from Mauritius, who usually serve it up in a curry. The Testudinæ comprise the genera : *Chersina*, *Pyxis*, and *Testudo*. In Aldabra Island, between Madagascar and the Seychelles, these gigantic creatures sometimes attain an enormous size and often weigh over a ton.

An insect of striking appearance is the dog-locust, whose purple and gold proclaim him everywhere ; but do not touch him, for his odour is most objectionable, so much so, that he is perfectly safe from the attention of any bird. Happily, this pest is confined to the circle of forest surrounding the highland region in a broad belt.

Unfortunately, the whole of western Madagascar is visited by that scourge of tropical and subtropical countries the migratory locust, which often descends in vast clouds upon the bean-plantations of the Sakalava, doing incalculable harm to the young plants. At times; the damage is so serious that a complete re-sowing is necessary ; but the prospects of a good crop from this later sowing are not bright, for a sufficiency of moisture for germination is not always present in the soil later than March. As rains cannot

be definitely expected before the following January in the south-west portion of the island, it may readily be imagined that a locust invasion is a thing to be dreaded, for here the bean crop is the most lucrative of all.

Those interesting insects the solitary wasps are numerous in Madagascar, and give an infallible indication of the approach of the wet season by sealing up their stores of caterpillars on the veranda posts of European houses or rafters of native huts.

SOME NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF WESTERN MADAGASCAR

As is well known, Madagascar was once the home of that great struthious bird *Aepyornis maximus*, the largest of all feathered creatures (with the exception of the dinornis of New Zealand), and considered by many writers to be the origin of the fabulous roc of "The Arabian Nights." Even to this day, numerous fragments of this bird's eggs are to be found scattered over the sands of the extreme south, and in 1912 some of my men discovered a perfect specimen, of which I give a photograph. The dimensions of this egg,



Egg of *J. PYORNIS MAXIMUS* DISCOVERED IN MANGORY VALLEY.

Dimensions : Largest diameter, 0'32 centimetres.
Smallest diameter, 0'21 centimetres.
Weight when found, 1 kilogram 580 grammes.
Greatest circumference, 0'86 centimetres.
Smallest circumference, 0'68 centimetres.
Content, 8 litres (about 2 gallons).

which was obtained in the region of the Mangoky River, are set forth beneath the illustration. From the evidence supplied by fossilised remains we now know that several smaller species of *Aepyornis* existed, and, according to the folklore of the southern Mahafaly and Tanosy tribes, it would appear that these huge birds have not been extinct for more than two centuries, and were exterminated by man.

Of the 157 genera of land-birds now inhabiting Madagascar, no less than 130 are peculiar to the island, and of these many belong to isolated genera—a fact which renders their classification a matter of extreme difficulty. Those, however, which show a resemblance to existing African species outnumber those exhibiting Malayan, or more correctly Indian, affinities, which, after all, is only natural, considering the comparative nearness of the African coast as opposed to the distance separating Madagascar from the nearest point of Asia.

The best bird-friend of the hungry traveller in Sakalava-land is undoubtedly the akanga, or guinea-fowl. Akanga, by the way, is one of the few Swahili words in the Sakalava

dialect, and is derived from the cry of the bird—"akanga! akanga!" With the aid of a dog, good bags may be secured, but without a dog the flocks of twenty to thirty birds scatter in the jungle and render pursuit somewhat difficult. It is a curious fact that once the guinea-fowl has taken to a tree when pursued by a trained dog, nothing will induce it to seek safety in flight. Fascinated by the dog's antics, it ignores the approach of man, and thus falls a very easy prey to the native hunter.

The masked or black-faced sand-grouse (*Pterocles personatus*) is very plentiful throughout the Mangoky and Fiherenga valleys, and breeds amongst the scanty scrub lying at the base of the mountain ranges, laying its eggs towards the end of December. It remains in the hills throughout the day, only repairing to the water-holes in the plains at dawn and at dusk. To secure a good bag, the sportsman must be concealed in the vicinity of the favourite drinking-place before sunrise, for should the birds apprehend danger previous to alighting, they will continue their flight to some other spot many miles away; but once the advance guard descends and starts

drinking, no amount of firing will deter the oncoming hosts from settling. This bird is very prolific, and hatches eight to ten young out of a nest of ten to twelve eggs. They pair off in the early days of December, and after the rains congregate in flocks of about forty strong, whose staccato cries are a marked feature of the opening and of the closing of the day on the sand-banks of the western rivers.

Perhaps the most widely distributed of all Malagasy wildfowl is the widowed tree-duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*), whose piercing cry, "pyswy, pyswy," is heard in the vicinity of all water. This bird sometimes breeds up in the hills, a long way from the sea, although one must count it among those duck that fly twice daily to and from their feeding-grounds. This, at least, is the behaviour of the *Dendrocygnæ* on the Sakalava coasts. A wounded tree-duck is somewhat difficult to handle, on account of the very sharp claws on its webbed feet.

The African humped duck (*Sarcidiornis africana*) breeds locally, and manages to hatch off its brood by the middle of the wet season. Though called a duck, the *Sarcidiornis africana*,

from its prodigious size and excellent flavour, might almost be a small goose.

The dwarf goose (*Nettapus auritus*) is a very handsome bird, being gorgeously marked on neck and body, and it is a delightful sight to see it reappear after a dive, all glistening like a rainbow in the tropical sunlight. The dwarf goose perches on trees in the daytime, especially in hot weather, while the tree-duck mentioned above spends the night on the ocean.

Another diving duck, with a white back, is "fady" (taboo) to the Masikoro women, although it is very good eating. This bird lays an enormous egg out of all proportion to the size of its body, and during the breeding season the females are often so hurt by the passage of the egg that they temporarily become feeble or faint, and can easily be picked off the nest by hand, totally unable to make good their escape by flight. The ramatous (native women), fearing similar unpleasant conditions during childbirth, will not allow this duck in their huts, for they maintain that they would experience like difficulties were they to partake of the bird's flesh. In this connection, I might add that

childbirth among the Sakalava is hardly ever attended by any complications, the mother resuming her daily work of pounding maize the day after her deliverance.

Cormorants are common along the Fiherenga coast, and become especially numerous in the neighbourhood of St. Augustin at the mouth of the Onihaly River. They are loathsome birds, feeding almost exclusively on the black fresh-water spiral snail (*Melanatria Johnsoni*), and seem to have a liking for the presence of the crocodile. They do not approach the reptile like the white-winged heron, but for some reason or other seem to keep guard over these enemies of the people from a convenient perch, and, according to Mahafaly legends, give ample warning of human approach.

Two snake-necked darters frequent the western water-courses, and, curiously enough, one species is allied to the African family, while the other, a black-bellied bird, is identical with that found in India.

Fully sixteen different species of herons inhabit the Mangoky delta, and of these the giant heron (*Ardea goliath*) and great white heron (*Ardea alba*) are particularly striking

birds. Some of these herons only leave the shelter of the mangrove swamps at dusk to feed on the open flats, and the great bittern and night-heron (*Nycticorax griseus*), together with *Ardea leucoptera* and *Ardea minuta*, are usually observed at sundown in that short tropical twilight.

It is a most interesting experience for the ornithologist to station himself on the sand-banks between the mangroves at sunrise, and on one occasion, at Andranopasy, I observed no fewer than eight different members of the Ardeidæ family alight together on the mud left by the receding tide. Surely, it is not a usual spectacle to see the egret jostle the purple heron (*Ardea purpurea*), the dwarf heron (*Ardea podiceps*), the squacco heron (*Ardea ralloides*), the great white heron, and many others !

The true egret is practically exterminated from all save the most inaccessible regions, and this state of affairs is truly lamentable. I saw Creole hunters, for the sake of a few miserable feather plumes, shoot the mother bird while she was in the act of feeding her young. I should like to record, on the other hand, that no Sakalava willingly raises

his hand against the egret ; but this is probably because he cannot distinguish it from the false egret (called vorompotsy by the natives). Moreover, the law forbids him to carry fire-arms, and snaring is at the best but slow and uncertain work.

Rails and crakes are well represented in Madagascar, and many of these are unknown elsewhere.

Between the rails and the herons come the Mesitidæ, which to my mind, however, approach the Scolopacidæ as regards their behaviour towards their young. This trait in their character causes them to be held in superstitious awe by the natives, who are somewhat reluctant to give any information about their haunts.

As the spoonbill and the avocet are well-known European birds, I need only mention that they are very plentiful on the Mangoky, as is also the Madagascar open-billed stork. Near Bekapilo, I secured some specimens of a very handsome crested ibis, whose colouring, in contrast to the generally sombre hues of this species in other parts of the globe, was extremely brilliant.

Lower down the river, however, at the

edge of the mangroves, I shot a bird of this family which greatly puzzled me ; its shape pointed to the curlew, yet its colouring and size distinctly indicated the ibis. I should have liked to have been able to obtain the opinion of an ornithologist at the time ; subsequently, none could help me, for my skins were unfortunately irretrievably damaged in a canoe accident up-river. The bird was of a rich bluish-brown and uniformly glossy, so that it may have been a variety of the glossy ibis, although among all the five species I shot, some of them with strangely variegated hues, I never found the European glossy ibis.

Great numbers of both curlew and whimbrel are found on the Sakalava coast, but I greatly doubt whether any of the species, except the true Madagascar curlew, is resident throughout the year. This, however, is possible, for there is always an abundance of food ; but from October to February vast numbers of European waders sojourn among these congenial surroundings, and their behaviour, I have noticed, is quite different from that of the native birds of the same species.

A lover of wild-fowl and shore birds would delight in the variety and unusual forms of the true plover, which can be seen on the ideal sand-flats in front of the mangroves at Ambohibé. The Vezos call these birds kibo-andrano (or water-quail), which name is also shared by the dunlin. The smaller ringed plover (*Ægialitis tricollaris*) are nicknamed kiboranto (distance-reaching quail), probably on account of their habit of running about the sands all day long and only taking to the wing when forced to do so by the incoming tide.

Every known species of the Old World golden plover passes the west coast on migration, and so does the grey plover (*Squatarola helvetica*). Although shooting in the height of the hot weather (corresponding to the South African midsummer and European midwinter), I was glad to obtain several specimens of the last-mentioned bird in full winter plumage, furnishing abundant proof that the bird was migratory, since it is known to breed in the Arctic tundras, almost encircling the globe on its annual journeys to do so. Furthermore, all the plover, dunlins, and turnstones were in their winter plumage,

in spite of the summer season in the southern hemisphere, and these waders were extremely shy, in contrast to the confiding nature of the native-bred birds.

In the Mangoky delta, I secured three kinds of stilt plover, one crab plover (this is not a true plover, but belongs to the Dromatidæ, a sub-family of the gulls), five of the genus *Charadrius*, two species of turnstone, and a speckled plover whose genus I am unable to state with certainty.

The tamarind trees throughout the west-coast villages are filled with the pear-shaped nests of the Sakalava weaver-bird (*Ploceus sakalava*), which shares with the red-crested cardinal the distinction of being the sparrow in this part of the world, while the Malagasy parrot is sometimes kept by the natives as a pet.

Two birds, both found in the Mangoky valley, among several of which I was unable to classify, are particularly worthy of mention. The first, a large grey snipe, akin to the European double snipe, was probably the common Madagascar snipe, though in size it more closely resembled a woodcock. It haunts, however, the open swamps, and this

would certainly indicate the snipe. The other bird at first sight looked like a cross between a woodcock and an ibis, and the French call it "coq de brousse" or "coq de bois." From its appearance, it should be an aquatic bird, like the ibis and curlew; but it lives in the dry forest-belt far from water, and the only district in which I encountered it was in the thick bush round Befandriana. Its size is that of the curlew, but it has much shorter legs, and they as well as its long slender bill are bright crimson in colour, while the breast feathers are a slaty grey, the pointed wings being a shade darker.

This "coq de brousse" does not perch anywhere, but lives on the ground, and its flight is so heavy that it falls a very easy prey to the sportsman or native hunter. Its flesh is very palatable when roasted, but what food the bird subsists on I am unable to say, the crops of the few specimens I managed to secure being empty. Unfortunately, this strange inhabitant of South-western Madagascar is becoming rarer every year, and will doubtless soon join the list of the extinct. Even the bird-world, it would seem, is harassed by the brutal problem so neatly

expressed in the phrase "Get on or get out!"

In the far south, the bush country abounds with bird-life, which seems paradoxical enough, for apparently there is no sustenance even for the smallest creature. A very familiar sight was the hoopoe perched on the coral tree, keeping watch in the topmost branch with a large coua (*Coua pyrropygia*), while a diminutive quail no larger than a sparrow ran about the coarse sandy soil beneath the trees. This species of tiny quail was quite unknown to me, as also was a grey ground-bird with a long tail, called the "Malagasy pheasant."

One or two rollers were met with, but these birds are scarcer in the south than in the eastern forests. Swallows and goat-suckers are common everywhere in the low country, and the white-necked Madagascar crow (*Corvus scapulatus*) is to be found throughout the island. I obtained my first glimpse of the last-mentioned bird in the Comoro group, his pied plumage forming an arresting spot of colour along the beaches of the lagoons.

From this brief collection of notes on western Malagasy bird-life I must not omit

the scarlet flamingo, which visits this side of the island in huge flocks in June or July, when the sun is least powerful. It would seem that the Madagascar flamingo is home-bred, but I must admit that no account of any breeding-haunt ever reached me. It is a wonderful sight to see these handsome birds spread over a mile of lagoon, standing wing to wing in the shallow water, the rosy pink of their plumage clearly visible in the bright atmosphere from a mile or two distant.

Before concluding, I must say that to me a most pleasing feature of Madagascar bird-life was the extraordinary tameness of the wild-fowl. To cite an instance, I was able to approach a beautifully coloured ibis standing next to a spoonbill (*Platalea tenuirostris*) near enough to distinguish the colour of the iris ; and upon more than one occasion my canoes passed through whole flocks of tree-duck and teal (*Querquedula hottentota*) without causing a single bird to take flight.

The breeding season for indigenous birds seems to fall in December and January in those parts of the island which I visited, and nature has probably arranged this so, in order that the breeding birds need not fly far to

quench their thirst, for during these months the scanty rainfall arrives and the lagoons fill with water.

SOME NOTES ON THE FLORA OF WESTERN AND SOUTH-WESTERN MADAGASCAR

The climate of Western and South-western Madagascar is much less humid than that of the eastern and north-western portions of the island, and south of the port of Morondava, which lies near the twentieth parallel of latitude, one might say there was no seasonal rainfall. Occasionally, a sudden rainfall is recorded in the latter half of October, but in average years no great precipitation takes place until the middle of January. From January scanty rains may continue until the begining of March, when the lagoons again dry up ; but it is by no means an infrequent occurrence for a whole year to pass without a measurable rainfall, especially in the far south-west.

This sparsity of moisture, caused by the dry winds that blow from the Indian Ocean and dispel the rain-clouds as if by magic,

has naturally had a marked effect on the character of the vegetation, which, except in the immediate vicinity of the rivers, is not strictly tropical. In fact, the flora of that portion of the island lying south of Morondava, where the last of the coral tree is to be seen, is most curious and interesting, and its like is not to be found elsewhere in the whole world. It is strange, however, that a certain affinity exists between the flora of Madagascar and that of tropical America, and a grass called *echinoloene* is confined to Madagascar and Northern Brazil !

In the western river-valleys the raphia palm (*Raphia ruffia*) is a very common tree, and the natural cordage supplied by its leaves is too well known to require any description here. Equally widely distributed is the tamarind tree (*Tamarindus indica*), and there is scarcely a village without at least one leafy specimen, beneath whose welcome shade the chiefs hold palavers and the villagers gossip or make love. There is a predominance of mangroves along the river mouths; and the *Rhizophora mucronata* yields a valuable bark, which is exported in large quantities to Hamburg and New York. Several kinds of

ficus also occur in the well-watered districts, and I think I recognised the wild hibiscus.

Many species of baobabs (*Adansonia*) are to be met with along the west coast, and a certain value attaches to this family, for their kernels, when crushed, produce a rich oily essence, and the liquid contained in their bulbous stems not only enables the trees to withstand drought, but has also aided many a thirsty traveller, toiling to reach the next water-hole, before he became totally exhausted.

The forest-belt in the hinterland of Main-tirano contains many beautiful orchids, and a goodly proportion of valuable ebony. Of the last-mentioned tree, the species chiefly sought by the Sakalava is the *Diospyros microrhombus*, for the Hindu trader is willing to advance more money on this wood than on any other product of the country.

The Apocynaceæ furnish some shrubs of economic value yielding caoutchouc, and more frequently juices from which the Sakalava ferment intoxicating liquors.

Of the Landolphiæ, *Landolphia sphaerocarpa* and *Landolphia perrieri* form the most important source of the rubber exportation.

In the dry regions we find an abnormal proportion of plants, shrubs, and trees belonging to the Euphorbiaceæ. Nearly all these plants are leafless, and their stems resemble cacti more than anything else, with a typical blossom, or, more correctly, a leafy crown at the extremity of the branches. The coral tree is, perhaps, the best known of these, and is called "famata" by the Sakalava. The traveller in the strange Antandroy country is always struck by the extraordinary form of a tree, the botanical name of which is *Pachypodium lamerei*, the vontaka of the Malagasy. Its bottle-shaped trunk and enormous pods are a characteristic and conspicuous feature of the landscape in that sun-baked land.

In traversing the native paths in the bush country on the Mahafaly borderland, great caution has to be exercised in avoiding contact with the spiny scrub, for if the flesh is lacerated, a troublesome form of skin disease called "plaies malgaches," or "Malagasy wounds," is very easily contracted by a European. Probably, the unclean bodies of the Mahafaly have contaminated the thorns bordering the tracks—at least, this is the only

solution of the problem that suggests itself to me.

When travelling in this desert country of the south, it is advisable to wear blue sunglasses with gauze protection against the hairs of the raiketa plant (a species of prickly-pear cactus). These minute hairs, when detached from the ripened fruit, are borne along on the south wind, and if sufficient numbers enter the eye, the terrible irritation which they occasion gives rise to a species of blindness. The Mahafaly plant the raiketa as a stockade protection to their villages, and the itching and pain produced by even a slight contact with the plant are sufficient proof of the formidable nature of such a barricade. The opuntia is a plant of great service to the tribes of the far south, and forms a reliable source of water all along the dry maritime plain.

In the irrigated military gardens of Morondava and Tuléar, very many species of introduced fruits and vegetables are cultivated. During the cool season I noticed carrots, lettuce, and beetroot, and a great variety of leguminous plants growing in the garden oases in the vicinity of white settlements. The

bean tribe was especially well represented, and one sort, the haricot de Sévas, closely allied to our Rangoon bean, crops all the year round.

I was unfortunately not able to discover the secret of the amazing success of the grape-vine in the midst of such a desert as the plain of Tuléar, and yet once a month from November to January the mail-steamer takes a cargo of beautiful grapes to the grateful but less favoured inhabitants of Majunga. Well-flavoured limes are to be obtained all along the coast, and this fruit must have flourished for many centuries in Western Madagascar. Mangoes and paw-paws are plentiful everywhere, and groundnuts (*Arachis hypogaea*) do well, while yams (*Colocasia antiquorum*), the two sorghums (*S. halepense* and *vulgare*), together with ordinary millet, are to be seen in every native compound.

Cajanus indica represents the pea family; and the *Phaseolus*, as I have said before, seems peculiarly adapted to the soil.

The few Europeans who can withstand the climatic conditions of the inland valleys adorn their ugly bungalows with *Bougainvillea spectabilis*, *Hibiscus rosasinensis*, and the different *Passifloreæ*.

In the bush country generally, except south of the Menabé province, *Alyxia lucida*, *Dalbergia trichocarpa*, and *Gardenia succosa* are to be found; and the climbing creeper, *Mucuna axillaris*, which scatters most irritating little hairs from its bean-pods, is more prevalent than pleasant. The *Guettarda speciosa* is exploited for its mottled timber, called zebra-wood; and the list of common species will be completed when I mention the "lalona" (*Weinmannia lucens*) and "sohihy" (*Cephalanthus spathelliferus*).

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